

# signature annual awards

2012



**Signature**  
excellence in communication  
with deaf people



Signature Annual Awards



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# Joseph Maitland Robinson Award for Outstanding Contribution

The Joseph Maitland Robinson Award for Outstanding Contribution is awarded in memory of a benefactor who secured the future of our work at a time of considerable financial uncertainty. Since the award was first presented in 1989 we have seen many remarkable individuals receive this award.

Each has made a truly outstanding contribution to improving the everyday communication experiences of deaf and deafblind people. The award recognises passion, long-term commitment, service provision, awareness-raising, or campaigning efforts. As we mark our 30th anniversary we are delighted to add another deserving name to that list.

So, who will be the recipient of the 2012 Joseph Maitland Robinson Award for Outstanding Contribution? You will be the first to know when the announcement is made at the end of the ceremony.

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“I am honoured that, as a member of the deaf community who endeavours to make BSL stronger, and the deaf community a better place to live in every day, I am able to contribute to achieving this in a small way for deaf BSL teachers and BSL learners so that we can make it happen through the empowerment of deaf people. To receive this award is an absolute privilege.”

**Clark Denmark**  
**2011 Joseph Maitland Robinson Award**





# Welcome

Welcome to the prestigious Plaisterers' Hall for this, the fourth Signature Annual Awards ceremony.

The ceremony is always the highlight of our year and this year it will be particularly special, because it coincides with the 30th anniversary of Signature becoming a registered charity. We look forward to sharing our celebrations with you and recognising the contributions you have made to our collective vision of a society in which deaf people have full access.

The Signature Annual Awards acknowledge the people whose exceptional efforts we are privileged to recognise this evening. We have received hundreds of nominations this year and the panel have enjoyed reading every single one. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to share with us the inspirational stories of individuals and groups in our communities.

Congratulations to all our nominees. I hope you, your family and friends will enjoy the evening. We are very grateful to you and wish you luck in your continued efforts to improve the everyday communication experiences of deaf and deafblind people.



Nick Lewis  
Chair, Board of Trustees





# Programme

- 19.00 Drinks reception
- 19.30 Seated for welcome speech and dinner
- 21.30 Presentation of awards

*Organisational Achievement*  
*Young Learner of the Year*  
*Communication Professional of the Year*  
*Teacher of the Year*  
*Centre of the Year*  
*Learner of the Year*  
*Community Spirit*  
*Joseph Maitland Robinson Award for Outstanding Contribution*

- 23.00 End of award ceremony
- Please note the venue will close at 23.30.



"Each year the number of nominations increases, we are proud of all our finalists and congratulate our winners; you all deserve credit for your achievements."

**Jim Edwards, Chief Executive**



# Shortlists

## *Community Spirit*

### **Niki Johnson - The Arboretum Community Project/Café**

Niki Johnson had a dream that became a reality. In 2009 she set up a café where the deaf community could meet and have a say in what they want and need. The café provides opportunities for work experience and volunteers are enrolled on courses to learn new skills. The profits from the cafe are reinvested into the project. In the future Niki aims to open a Deaf Elderly Residential Home where single and married Deaf people can live their later lives in comfort with the appropriate care.

### **Hands 4 Voices**

Hands 4 Voices was formed in 2011. They are a signing choir helping to raise awareness of sign language through music. They are relatively new, yet have made a huge impact on the local community. The members are Deaf, partially deaf and hearing and they all work together in unison. They perform shows and all funds raised go to a local primary school's Unit for the Hearing Impaired. The choir performs at local schools so the audiences can see the beauty of sign language used in time to music. It is a great community feeling to see Deaf and hearing people working together with the same passion.

### **Cornwall Deaf Centre Project "DIY DEAF OS"**

Cornwall Deaf Centre has been open for 24 years and it is the only Deaf Centre in Cornwall. Recently their premises had to be closed due to its bad state of repair. Without this place to meet there was concern some of the deaf community could become isolated, so the Deaf Centre was determined to reopen. A wonderful project "DIY DEAF OS" was established to save the Deaf Centre. Local companies donated building and DIY materials and volunteers turned up each day to help. The community pulled together to ensure that Cornwall Deaf Centre can carry on providing BSL classes, lunch groups, BSL social evenings, children's groups, church groups, and a place where people feel comfortable.

### **Jay Thomas-Morton**

At age 29, Jay Thomas-Morton has given so much of his time, passion and drive in helping his local Deaf community. He has provided support to asylum seekers, helping them to overcome communication difficulties and providing information. Jay has organised fun, relaxing events and social groups for Deaf and hearing people to attend, as well as establishing community groups to ensure access for Deaf people. Jay's continued flexibility and enthusiasm has helped raise £4000 for Deaf Ministries International which supports education and inclusion for Deaf children worldwide.







# Shortlists

## *Learner of the Year*

### **Lesley Weatherson, City Lit**

Lesley is dedicated to learning BSL and lipspeaking. She has a busy lifestyle, caring for her daughter who has cystic fibrosis and going out to work but she has not let her determination and passion for learning waiver. Lesley's new found confidence has seen her take on the role as Vice-Chair and Treasurer of the Association of Lipspeakers and she now runs a professional communication support business for deaf and hard of hearing people.

### **Joseph Jones, Newcastle College**

Whilst working in a café at Newcastle College, Joseph developed an interest in BSL. He was really interested in learning BSL but thought it was impossible as he had no previous qualifications. His willingness and enthusiasm to learn, means Joseph has overcome many hurdles. He has now successfully completed Level 1 to Level 3 within three years, and works as a Communication Support Worker at the college. Joseph has achieved what he thought was the impossible.

### **Robert Gilpin, Queen's University Belfast**

Robert is a retired marine engineer and appreciates the beauty and appeal of BSL. His input in class has created a fun and supportive environment. Robert has a great personality and sense of humour which has inspired and helped other class members. He started Level 1 and hopes to continue in his BSL studies. Outside the classroom Robert attends deaf clubs and is proud to be able to communicate with deaf and deafblind people.

### **Susan Henderson, Grantham College**

Susan was inspired to learn BSL because she wanted to communicate better with her autistic foster children; and in doing so has become part of the deaf community. Susan is a kind, considerate and helpful learner both inside and outside the classroom. During her studies she supported her fellow learners by organising practice sessions that had an encouraging atmosphere. Susan is now looking to enrol on a Level 3 course.

### **Kate Wheatley, [sonus]**

Kate's life has changed dramatically since starting to learn BSL. Within two years she has completed Level 1 to Level 3 and is now working in a hearing impaired unit in a mainstream school. She is dedicated to becoming a teacher of the deaf and is studying at university to reach this goal. Whilst learning BSL she volunteered with a youth activities department and has recently set up a signing club for the children at the school to improve their signing skills.

### **Sheryl Davies, Libraries & Learning, Worcestershire County Council**

Sheryl achieved the first unit of the Signature Level 1 Award in British Sign Language with top marks. She has not missed a class and places a high regard on her studies, always completing homework and being sure to fit in extra practice outside the classroom. With a strong desire to look after others, Sheryl aims to enter the care sector working with disabled children and anticipates that skills in BSL will help her in her work.





# Shortlists

## *Organisational Achievement*

### **DCAL**

The Deafness Cognition and Language (DCAL) Research Centre based at University College London is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Since being set up, over the past 6 years DCAL have carried out world leading research into deafness. They train researchers from all over the world promoting deaf studies and sign language research in many countries. DCAL support other deaf research organisations such as NDCS, BDA, BATOD and Action on Hearing Loss.

### **Life and Deaf Association**

Life and Deaf was launched in October 2006 as a Speech and Language Therapy project. Their aim was to develop Deaf children's self-esteem and communication in signed, spoken and written languages through the medium of poetry. The project developed and it gave Deaf children the opportunity to work with Deaf poets, Deaf instructors and actors. They created a beautiful book and a DVD of their BSL poetry that is distributed to Deaf children, Deaf families, charities and organisations in the community for all to enjoy.

### **SCoD**

Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) is the lead organisation for deaf issues in Scotland. Formed in 1927 as the Scottish Association of the Deaf (SAD) they continue to raise awareness about issues affecting Deaf BSL users, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing people. SCoD promotes partnerships between the voluntary and statutory sectors. They ensure information, support and advice are offered not only to deaf and deafblind people but also to families, carers and professionals working with them.

### **Hearing Dogs for Deaf People**

Hearing Dogs for Deaf People is celebrating 30 years of excellence, improving the quality of life for deaf people. They bring a life-changing visibility to deafness and help to restore greater levels of independence, confidence and also companionship to them. The charity supports around 750 hearing dog partnerships across all areas of the UK. More recently their services have extended to support Deaf children in the UK.

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"We are delighted to win this award in marking our achievements in increasing access to the arts for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people over the last 11 years. None of this would have been possible without the commitment of a dedicated Board of Trustees, and energetic staff team. We thank Signature for this recognition and dedicate this award to Geoff Brown, one of our founders without whom STAGETEXT would never have been born."

**STAGETEXT**  
**2011 Organisational Achievement**







# Shortlists

## *Young Learner of the Year*

### **Amber Nixon, BSL Centre Heathlands School**

Amber is a dedicated student. She struggled to communicate with her Deaf peers, so she decided to learn BSL. Her passion for learning sparked interest in others around her, encouraging them to enrol on BSL Level 1 course too. To help her progress her studies she volunteers outside the classroom at events where she learns from BSL users and interpreters.

### **Shannon Havern, Shimna Integrated College**

Shannon has a love for languages. Studying Spanish and French, she jumped at the opportunity to learn BSL and takes it just as seriously. Shannon has had to overcome many barriers at school, her positive attitude and a willingness to learn has been rewarded with success in her BSL assessments. Her teachers describe her as a joy to teach.

### **Chloe Reynolds, Queen Elizabeth High School**

14-year-old Chloe's interest in BSL came when she saw sign language being used with Deaf pupils, and she wanted to learn straight away. Her commitment to learning has seen her give up her own time after school and she returns to the BSL class each year to ensure she does not lose her signing skills. She encourages her friends to learn and enjoys practicing with hearing impaired peers.

### **Drew Oliver, Lexicon Signstream**

Since starting to learn BSL, 9 year old Drew's shy personality has given way to show a confident young girl. She enjoys every lesson and always leaves each class with a beaming smile. She encourages others to participate and has helped arrange for her whole year group to attend a BSL session, learning fingerspelling and basic BSL. The class even used BSL in the Christmas nativity play.

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"I am literally over the moon that I have won the young learner of the year award, which I didn't expect to win at all! I am very grateful and will treasure it! Attending the ceremony was amazing. It was wonderful to experience a fantastic deaf awareness atmosphere. I am really grateful to my teacher for nominating me, without him and my Teacher of the Deaf, I wouldn't have had this extraordinary opportunity. Thank you ever so much everybody!"

**Tara-Eve Forkin**  
**2011 Young Learner of the Year**





# Shortlists

## *Learner of the Year*

### **Caroline O'Brien, Signite**

Caroline has worked hard to build a supportive environment for her family. She has two deaf sons which encouraged her to learn BSL. Working tirelessly to ensure that her sons have the best education possible, she fought hard to keep a local deaf school open, by lobbying to the local council. Caroline also ensures family funds are used so the whole family can learn and communicate fully in BSL. She hopes to progress and become a fully qualified BSL interpreter.

### **Christine Hardy, Handy Training Ltd**

Communicating with her deaf family at home sparked Christine's interest in BSL and she now works at Deafblind UK helping and inspiring others. Her commitment for learning BSL has gone from strength to strength. She achieved a degree in Deaf Studies and soon after, in 2011, enrolled on a Level 6 NVQ Certificate in BSL. That year she was involved in a car crash and despite her injuries has carried on her course and successfully completed it.

### **Bobs Blackwell, Field Interpreter Training**

Bobs lost her confidence and became isolated after suffering from ill health and having been made redundant. Learning sign language has given her a purpose and focus, she volunteers everywhere she can for a variety of organisations and events. Since starting to learn BSL in 2005 Bobs has not looked back and has now completed her Level 6 NVQ Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting and recently registered with the NRCPD as a Registered Sign Language Interpreter.

### **Louisa McDaid, BSL Scotland**

Learning BSL has played an influential part in Louisa's life. She volunteers within the community and uses her newly gained skills to help communicate with hard of hearing and deaf people that she meets. Her learning began with a Level 1 Award in Deaf Awareness and Communication and her attainment of qualifications has since multiplied with qualifications in BSL, Electronic Notetaking and Lipspeaking. Louisa has aspirations to continue her studies and build on the impact she has within the deaf community.

### **Neil Morris, St Helen's College**

Neil's natural charm and humour has had a positive affect on everyone he meets. He was brought up in a Deaf family and from a young age BSL was part of his life. Neil's unique ability to understand and use BSL has not only helped his learning but those who depend on him. He has helped care for his mother most of his adult life and has studied extremely hard in gaining his Level 6 NVQ Certificate in BSL qualification and hopes to pursue a career in interpreting.

### **Gwyneth Molloy, Catholic Institute for Deaf People**

When her daughter was born deaf, Gwyneth made it her mission to learn Irish Sign Language (ISL). Learning ISL meant that she had to overcome her shy personality to ensure she was participating as much as possible in each class. As her daughter grows, she hopes to carry on expanding her skills to ensure she is fluent in order to support her daughter's development and inclusion. Her eagerness to learn is inspirational.





# Shortlists

## *Centre of the Year*

### **The John Townsend Trust**

The John Townsend Trust is a charity that supports deaf children, young people and adults with other disabilities. They have delivered Signature qualifications for more than 25 years. Their large workforce of approximately 450 staff work hard to provide their students with all the support and information they need to succeed. The Trust's work extends across the East Kent community, including the Police Force, Fire Service and Local Disability Teams.

### **Sign and be 'Heard'**

Sign and be 'Heard' have been delivering Signature qualifications in Scotland for four years. Their experienced team help students in gaining the confidence needed for them to use their new skills in the community. They encourage BSL students to learn from each other and offer 'Voice Off' evenings for students to gain real life experience. They are very approachable, accessible and supportive to all teachers and students. They are also lobbying the Scottish Government for a Bill to bring BSL into the curriculum starting at nursery.

### **Communication Plus**

Communication Plus offer Signature qualifications up to the Level 6 NVQ Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting. They provide a great learning atmosphere in an enjoyable and supportive environment. They get great results and many learners stay with them for the whole of their BSL learning journey. Within the community they work hard to make sure that Deaf people are empowered. To do this they provide information and training to local organisations such as the police and NDCS to ensure deaf people have full access to the information they need.

### **MSDP Training and Development**

MSDP Training and Development have been delivering Signature qualifications for the past 20 years. They provide free BSL courses to Deaf people who want to learn sign language, providing full access for Deaf people. They also apply for funding to ensure as many people as possible can learn BSL without financial restraints. Their service is used throughout their local community, where they have trained local organisations like ASDA and the local council to support the needs of local Deaf people.

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"We are absolutely delighted and slightly overwhelmed to have received this amazing award from Signature. Our thanks must go to our tutors for their hard work and commitment! This award is so significant as it confirms and recognises our commitment and dedication to raising Deaf Awareness both in our school but also in the wider community and beyond. Our work does not stop here... This is only the start! Thank you Signature for your passion and organisation."

**Philip Morant School  
2011 Centre of the Year**







# Shortlists

## *Communication Professional of the Year*

### **Nicola Small, Electronic Notetaker**

Nicola was one of the first people to be qualified to as an electronic notetaking and continues to set the standard in the field. She believes that ensuring her clients receive the best possible support keeps them on an equal footing with their peers. She is committed to her role and travels considerable distances to provide a notetaking service to her clients.

### **Clare Edwards, RSLI**

A Sign Language Interpreter, popular with service users, Clare fell in love with BSL when she was young and has worked hard to become an interpreter. As part of her diverse career she interprets in theatres all over the UK, including plays like 'Sister Act' and 'Dirty Dancing', and often appears 'on screen' in hospitals and in the Transport Museum.

### **Kath Sykes, Speech to Text Reporter**

Kath is an accomplished speech to text reporter, she started out as a court reporter and adapted her skills to move into speech to text reporting. She provides a discreet service with the use of new technologies. Her introduction of an iPad to her service has meant that her clients can be fully integrated when attending meetings. Kath is held in high esteem by her clients and she is described as having 'magic hands'.

### **Zane Hema, RSLI**

Zane is an inspirational, charismatic and gifted interpreter, with an immense amount of skill and knowledge in the profession. He is known locally, nationally and globally due to his hard work and commitment in the field. Zane has held roles such as National Chair of ASLI and Founding Secretary of the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters.



"I'm thrilled to have received this award and it's a real privilege to have received public recognition from colleagues and service users for my work as a speech to text reporter. I was shortlisted for this award two years ago, so it was a real surprise to hear I had been nominated for a second time, but it was worth the wait. I would like to thank those who nominated me. Speech to text is still regarded as a relatively new area of communication support and I hope that winning this award will help to raise greater awareness."

**Jean Gough**

**2011 Communication Professional of the Year**





# Shortlists

## *Teacher of the Year*

### **Clive Mason, Centre for Deaf Studies**

Clive's vast experience has benefited students just starting to learn BSL or working towards Level 6. He encourages everyone to work to the best of their ability with his excellent rapport and enthusiastic style. He recently became one of the first people to complete the Signature Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Translation, he is also a dedicated deaf rights campaigner.

### **Jamie Billam, Cambridgeshire Deaf Association**

Jamie has a passion for every aspect of BSL, Deaf Culture and Deaf Awareness. He is extremely supportive to all members of his class, providing a range of teaching materials to aid learning and make students feel comfortable. He has set up a variety of clubs and lends himself to many organisations in the community to ensure deaf people do not feel socially isolated.

### **Jimmy Anderson, Deafway**

Jimmy's inclusive and supportive nature instantly relaxes learners in the classroom, and plays an influential part in students' progression. He provides information on deaf clubs and events to encourage students to practise outside the classroom. He grabs every opportunity to offer his services within the deaf community working for outreach services across the UK.

### **Stephen Joyce, Deafblind Scotland**

Stephen puts his teaching first. His unique method of teaching captivates all of his students, and when they learn that he has Usher Syndrome their perception of the capabilities of those with sensory impairment changes. He works tirelessly to improve the lives of deafblind people within the community, through health care, education and has raised thousands of pounds for charities.

### **Marie Franklin, Belfast Metropolitan College**

Marie works hard to support all of her learners ensuring that they all get the most out of each class. She grew up in a Deaf family and enjoys sharing her passion for sign language with her students. She helps at a number of events including health talks, social evenings and day trips, and is always encouraging her students to gain real experience out in the community.

### **Andrew Rowe, South Nottingham College**

Andrew is an extremely popular teacher who dedicates his time to helping students build their confidence. His patience and enthusiasm when teaching creates a fun and relaxing environment for his students. He ensures that all lessons are set at different paces for each individual and works hard to promote communication with deaf people within the community.





# Shortlists

## *Teacher of the Year*

### **Gaye Hampton, Sign Language Studies Centre**

Gaye is open and honest when providing feedback to her students helping them improve their skills. Outside the classroom she organises sessions which Level 1 to Level 6 learners can attend for practice and advice helping further their learning. She always goes above and beyond and continues in her own personal development making sure high standards of teaching are maintained.

### **Jon Palmer, The John Townsend Trust**

Jon is a constant source of joy, encouragement and support for his students and work colleagues. He has a positive and engaging attitude in class that all his students appreciate. Jon has helped set up pioneering projects within the local community and is a role model to many Deaf and autistic students; encouraging them to pursue their dreams and not let their deafness hinder them.

### **Jetinder Ajimal, BID services**

Jetinder is a young, enthusiastic teacher who strives to provide high quality teaching; he is keen for his students to learn Deaf Culture and brings new, innovative ideas to class, which all his students appreciate. His creative lessons keep all learners engaged and eager to learn more. He is committed to his own self development and is always looking for new challenges.

### **Keith Reed, Northumbria University**

Keith has inspired learners with his wide knowledge and insight into issues linking both the deaf and hearing world. He has a busy schedule that consists of vast amounts of voluntary work and teaching BSL. His great sense of humour makes his lessons fun and light hearted, and students are amazed at how much they learn.

### **Zane Hema, Signamic**

Zane is an inspirational teacher who provides his students with an unforgettable learning experience. He balances his own personal goals and teaching to ensure both are of a high quality. Zane has worked hard to ensure that standards in the profession remain high and at the heart of his work is the vision of a society offering equal access for deaf and deafblind people.

### **Nigel Clarke, Signia Signing**

Nigel's understanding, helpful and patient personality empowers his students to learn. His approach to teaching encourages students to continue their studies and progress onto higher levels with him. He continues to find new resources and he supports other teachers in developing further by getting involved in courses, and always has time for those interested in learning.





*Celebrating 30 years of  
excellence in communication  
with Deaf and Deafblind people*

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