

Media Release

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For Immediate Release

Reaching out to young people with hearing loss.

A local charity is spearheading an initiative to listen to young people with hearing loss and find out how the Coronavirus Pandemic has affected them.

Having secured funding from the NHS Endowment Trust, and the 10,000 Voices Fund, Dumfries & Galloway Hard of Hearing Group is working with Dumfries & Galloway Youth Work Services to reach out to young people of any age and with any degree of hearing loss. This can be young people still at school, in further education or in work.

Ann Ferguson, Chair of Dumfries & Galloway Hard of Hearing Group said this week “The COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread requirement to wear facemasks, particularly in schools, exacerbates the isolation many young people with hearing loss will be experiencing . Face masks make lip reading impossible and most young people with hearing loss, even if they

have hearing aids or cochlear implants rely on varying degree of lip reading to hear”

Councillor John Martin, Vice-Chair Communities Committee added “We are delighted to be working in partnership with Dumfries & Galloway Hard of Hearing Group in delivering a project that looks at the impact of Covid-19 on young people in the region. The project’s initiative was developed and created by Dumfries & Galloway Hard of Hearing Group, funded by NHS Endowment Trust and is being delivered by Dumfries and Galloway Council’s Youth Work Service. The Youth Work Service are working closely with Dumfries & Galloway Hard of Hearing Group to reach as many young people as possible using the partners from both organisations to hear the voices of young people. The findings of the report will complement the work that Dumfries and Galloway council is currently undertaking in relation to inequalities.”

Jenny Wells, a young person with hearing loss and a Dumfries & Galloway Hard of Hearing Group Trustee is encouraging young people with hearing loss to take part in the survey. She said “Many young people with hearing loss are, in normal times, often victims of bullying and ridicule which impacts on self-confidence and self-esteem. Hearing loss, as a disability, is poorly understood and without the ability to communicate well those with hearing loss can feel excluded”. She added “We are seeing an increase in the



number of young people with hearing loss experiencing mental health issues which is not unexpected given the additional challenges they face”

The first phase of the initiative is being launched this week which involves a confidential on-line survey which will help to measure the impact the pandemic and in particular the wearing of face masks is having on young people’s health and wellbeing. This is to be followed with further engagement which will focus on finding appropriate ways to support young people with hearing loss better. These findings will be shared with the relevant agencies early next year.

Details of the confidential on-line survey can be found on the Dumfries & Galloway Hard of Hearing Group website –

<https://www.dghhg.org.uk/hear-me-out/>

and Dumfries and Galloway Youth Work Services website on

<https://www.dghhg.org.uk/tag/youth-hearingloss-covid19/>

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Notes to Editor:

The Dumfries & Galloway Hard of Hearing Group's aim is to help and support people across Dumfries & Galloway who have a hearing loss

The organisation has a pool of 50+ volunteers who help maintain hearing aids and provide advice on hearing loss at drop-in clinics across the region as well as delivering a home visiting and care home visiting service.

Our hearing aid maintenance services are currently closed due to COVID-19. These will resume when it is safe to do so.

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