

# Me and my deaf brother and sister



# Information for parents

It can be hard for hearing children to understand that their sibling is deaf or what it means. They may feel worried, confused or even left out.

This activity booklet will help hearing siblings learn about what deafness is and what it's like to be deaf. There are also lots of fun activities and stories to help your child explore and express their emotions.

To get the most use out of this booklet, we recommend spending some time reading through the pages together. This way you can answer any questions that might come up. Some of the activities at the back may need an adult to help set them up.

As you're going through the booklet, you might want to ask some questions that explore the page themes. For example:

- What do you think it means to be deaf?
- What do you think is easy or hard for your sibling?
- How do you feel when that happens?
- What can we do as a family to make things easier?





## Activity

# My family

Draw or stick pictures of you and your family in the frames below.

**Me**

**My brother  
or sister**

**My family**





# What is deafness?

When someone is deaf, it means they can't hear everything you can. Not every deaf person is the same. One deaf person may be able to hear sounds another deaf person can't.

When you found out your brother or sister is deaf, you may have had lots of questions.

**I felt confused when I found out my sister was deaf. How deaf was she? What did it mean? How much would she be able to hear?**



## Other siblings like you have asked:

**Why are they the only deaf person in our family?**

**Why are my ears OK? Is it because I'm a girl?**

**Why is my brother deaf?**

**What is deafness? I thought only old people like Grandma are deaf.**

Being deaf is just one of the many unique things about your brother or sister. But it's natural to have questions or worries, so be sure to share them with a grown-up. They can help you and your deaf sibling get the support you need.



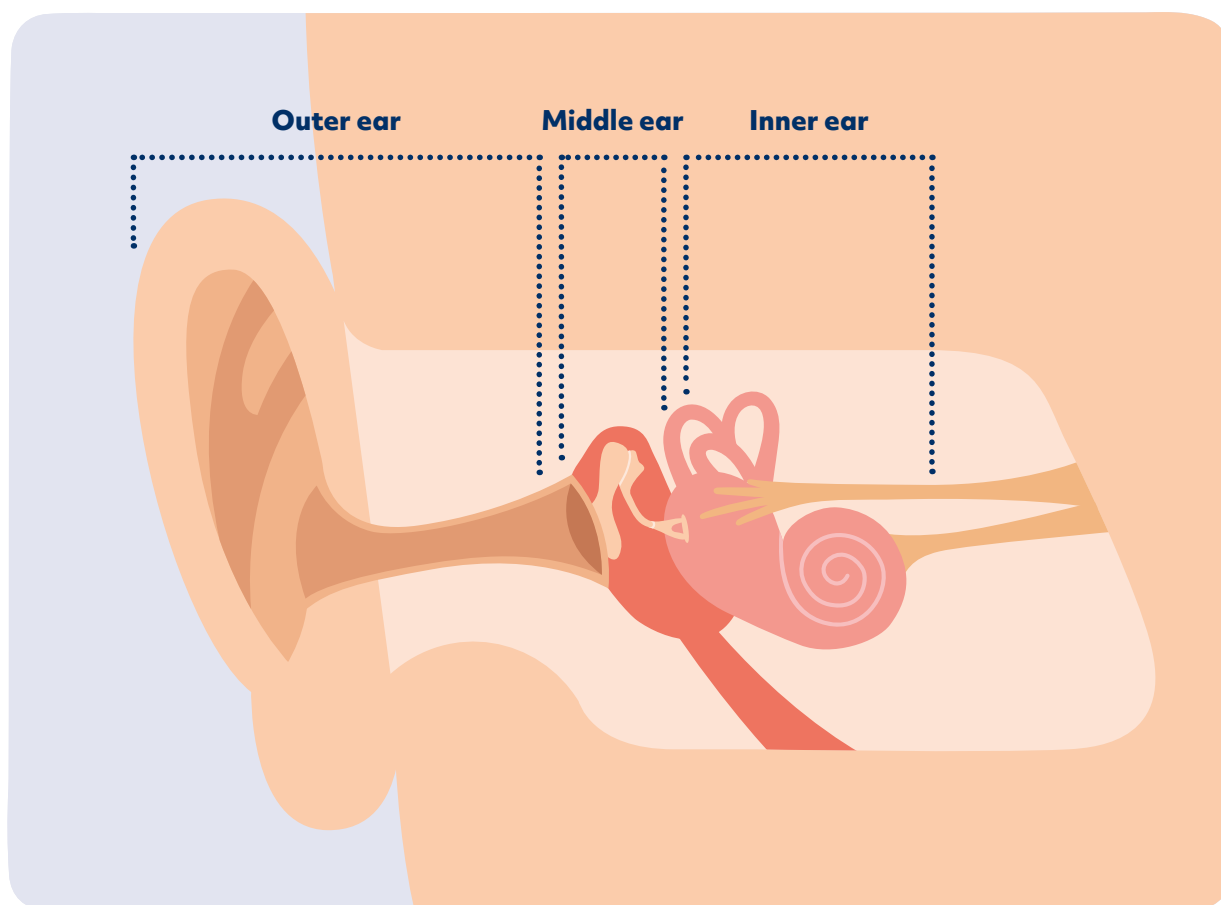
This booklet was produced with hearing siblings of deaf children and young people. They've shared their thoughts and feelings in the colourful speech bubbles. You might not agree with everything other children have said. That's OK! Every family is different.

## Why is my brother or sister deaf?

There are lots of reasons why someone is deaf. Your brother or sister might have been born deaf, or they might have been ill or had an accident and become deaf. Sometimes, even doctors don't know why someone is deaf. It's important to remember that it's not your brother or sister's fault that they're deaf.

## How do ears work?

Ears have three different parts: the outer ear, middle ear and inner ear. For people who are deaf, one or more parts of their ear or brain may not be working properly.



### Video



Watch a video to learn more about the ear. Go to [bit.ly/3rCYGKv](https://bit.ly/3rCYGKv) or scan this QR code.



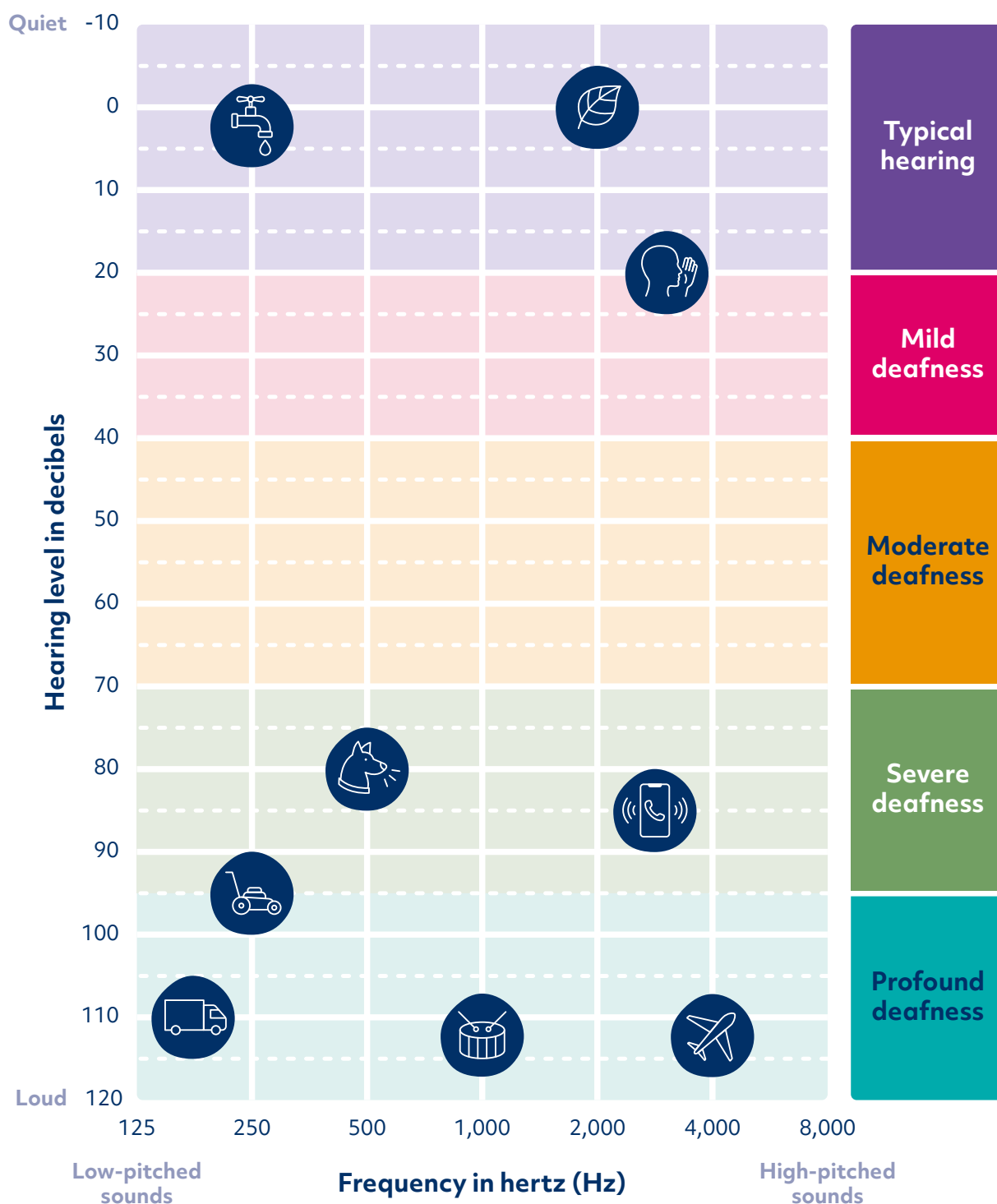
### Did you know?

Your ears help you to balance! Depending on their type of deafness, your brother or sister might feel dizzy or fall over more than you do.

## What can my brother or sister hear?

Your brother or sister might be able to hear a lot of sounds, or they might not be able to hear any. There are different levels of deafness.

Circle what your brother or sister can hear. If you don't know, ask your parents or your brother or sister. If your sibling can hear different things in each ear, you can use a red pen for the right ear and a blue pen for the left ear.



## How do hearing devices work?

Your brother or sister might wear special technology like a hearing aid, bone conduction hearing device or cochlear implant. These help them hear sounds better.



**Hearing aid**



**Cochlear implant**



**Bone conduction hearing device (BCHD)**

Even with a hearing device, your brother or sister won't hear the same things you hear. For example, if you're in a noisy place, your brother or sister will find it harder to pick out your voice above all the other sounds.

How does your brother or sister feel about their hearing devices? Some deaf children love their hearing devices. Some are embarrassed or worry that it makes them look different. How do you think you could help your brother or sister be proud of their hearing devices?

Some deaf children don't wear any hearing technology. This could be because hearing technology won't work for them or just because they choose not to. Every deaf person is different.



I felt left out when my sister was diagnosed. I wanted to have pink hearing aids, too – they looked great!





## Activity

**Use colours and stickers to help Meera, Duncan and Bo decorate their hearing devices.**



**I'm Meera.  
I wear hearing aids.**



**I'm  
Duncan.  
I wear a  
cochlear  
implant.**

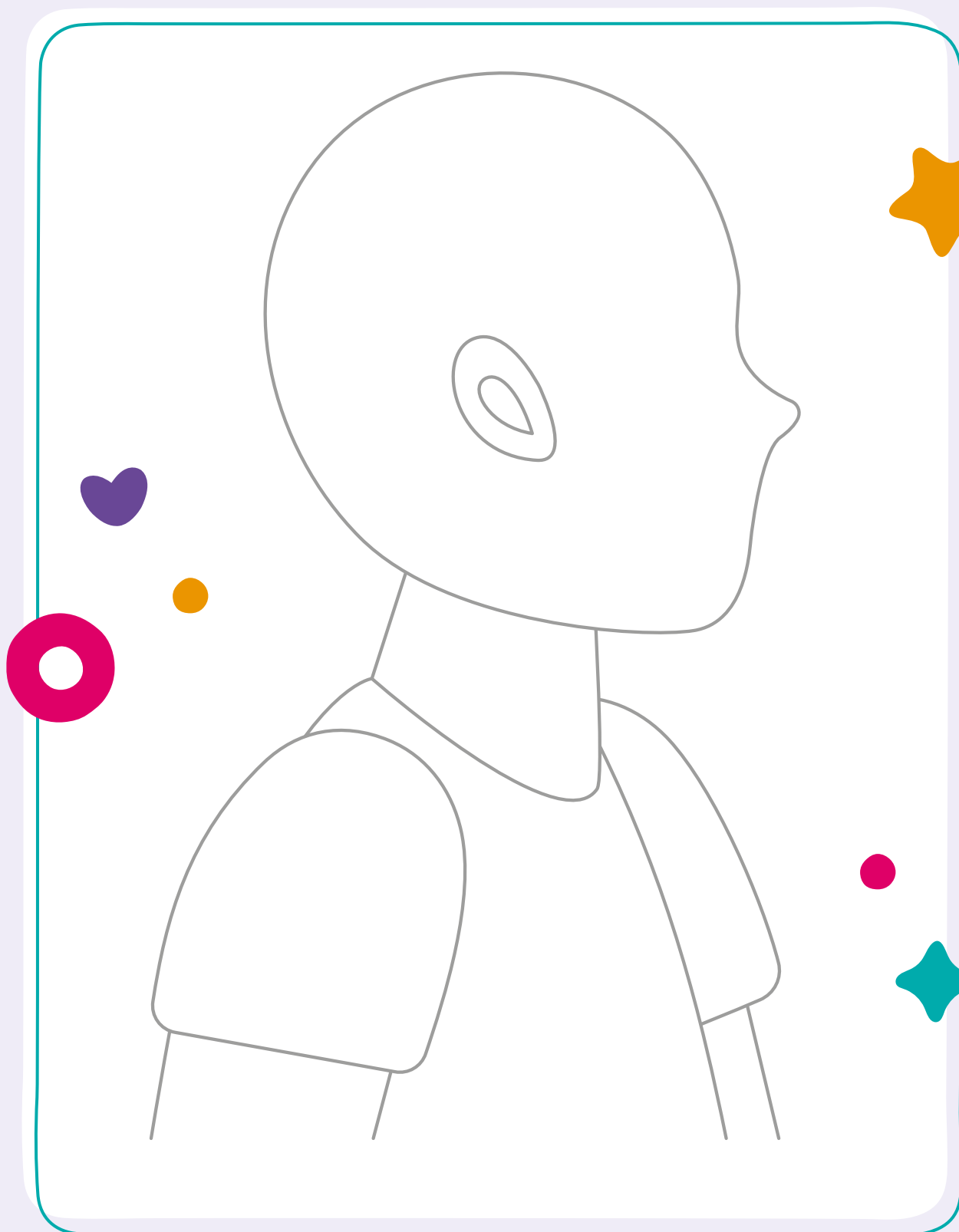


**I'm Bo.  
I wear  
a bone  
conduction  
hearing  
device.**



## Draw your brother or sister

Draw your brother or sister below. Make sure you draw their hearing technology if they wear any.

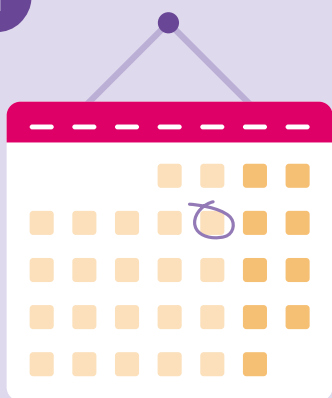


# Sam's story

Hi there! I'm Sam, and I have a sister called Nina. Nina can't hear very well, but it doesn't stop us from having fun together. Read about the time we celebrated Nina's birthday.



1

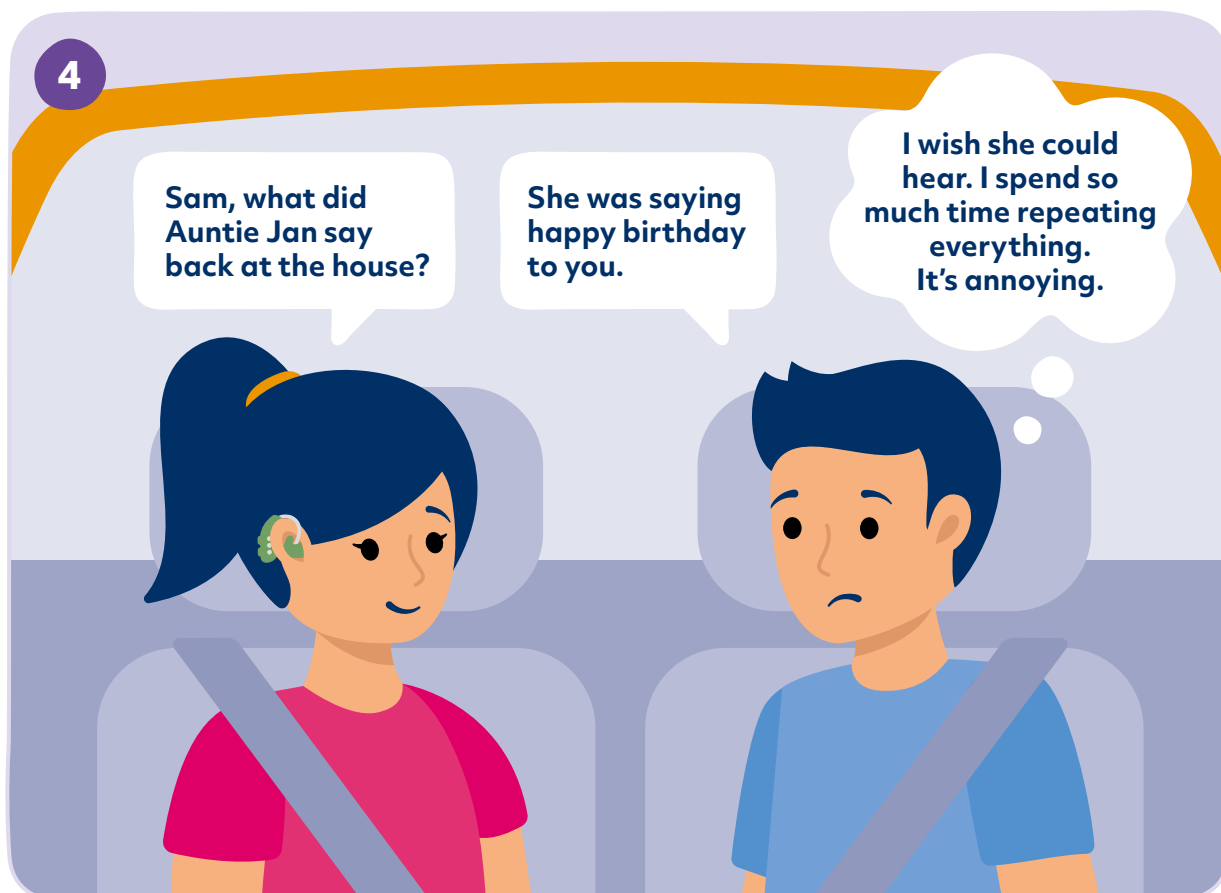


It's Nina's birthday today. We're going to the cinema.

2



Grumps and Grandma have arrived to give Nina her present. They've been learning sign language and always make sure Nina can see their faces clearly.



5

Dad, what are those green things in that girl's ears?

I'm not sure, son.

CINEMA

We arrive at the cinema. We're going to a film with subtitles. Some people are staring at Nina's hearing aids, but we ignore them.

6



The film was great! I wait until the lights come back on before I talk to Nina. She can't lip-read when it's dark.



Go to **page 15** to find out what lip-reading is.

## What are subtitles?

Subtitles are written words of what people say in a film or TV show. They show up at the bottom of the screen. Sometimes, they also show other sounds that happen on screen, like a door slamming.



# How does your family communicate?

There are lots of ways to communicate! Circle the ways you like to communicate with your brother or sister.

## Speaking

Even if your brother or sister uses speech, it can be tiring for them to follow what people say. It can be especially difficult in noisy places

Have you ever missed what someone's said? How would you feel if you asked them to say it again, and they told you, "Oh, never mind"?



### Top tip



Does your brother or sister ever pretend they know what's happening but then ask you later what people said? The next time they're talking with you or someone else, check in every now and again and ask if they understood. They may feel too shy to say when they missed something.

## Signing

Sign language uses different hand shapes, facial expressions and body language. Your brother or sister might use sign language all the time, they might speak and sign at the same time, or they might only use sign language when they're not wearing their hearing technology, like at the swimming pool.



**I feel special because some children don't know sign language, and I do!**

**I talk to him, but we have just started learning sign language, which is really cool!**

**I love that we can sign to each other when it's noisy.**

## Lip-reading

Lip-reading is when you can understand what someone is saying by carefully watching how their lips move. It's not possible to lip-read every sound, so a deaf person can't rely on lip-reading alone to communicate.

Try to look your brother or sister in their eyes when you talk or sign to them. This way, you can make sure they can see your face clearly, which will help them understand you!

**I make sure she can see my lips. It's difficult for her to lip-read someone who has a beard as she can't see their lips!**



## Body language

There are lots of ways to get your deaf brother or sister's attention. You could wave your hand, tap on the table or tap their shoulder. How do you get your deaf brother or sister's attention?

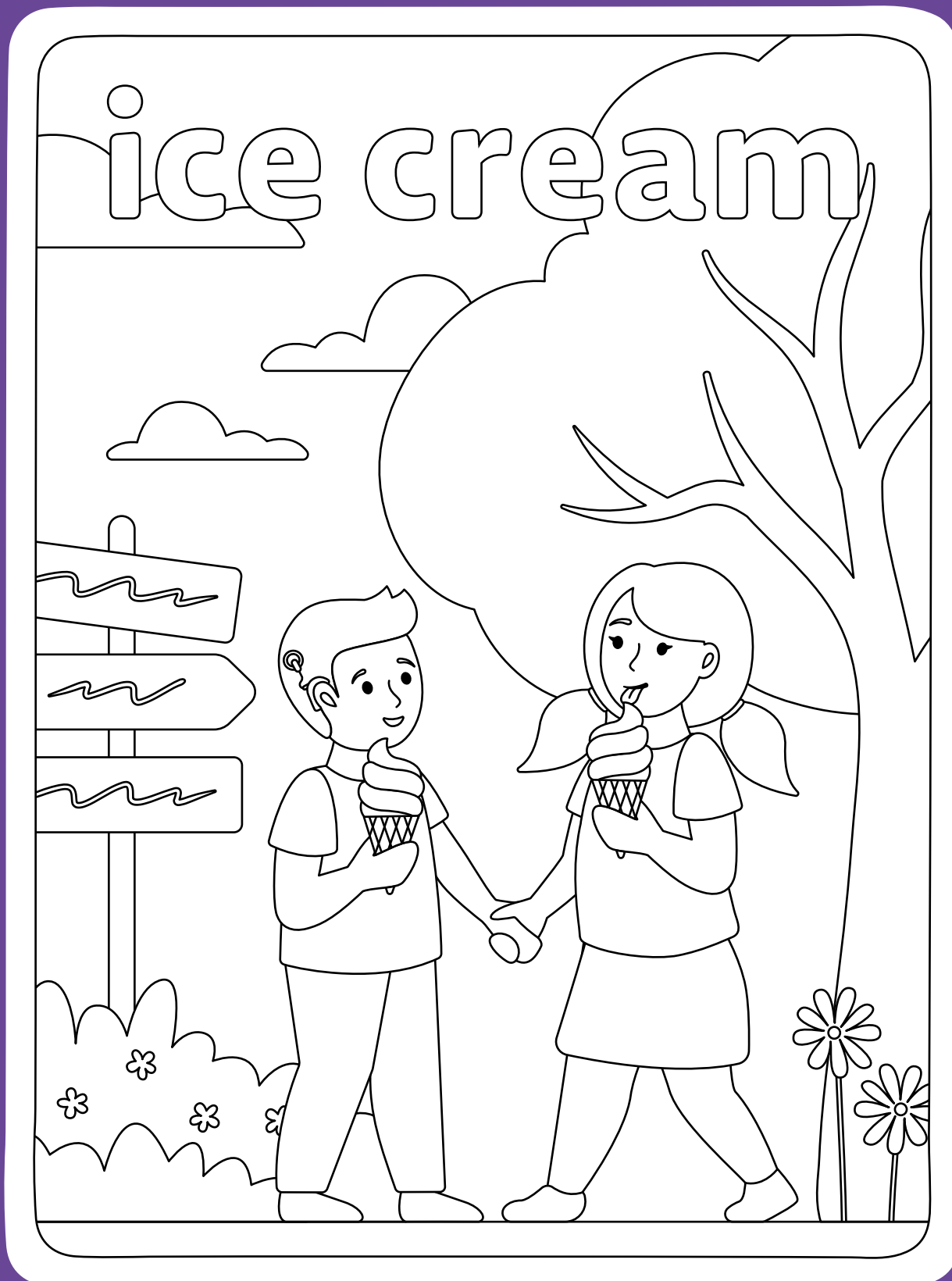


## Paper and pen

You can always draw or write messages to each other!



# Colour me in



# Practise your fingerspelling

In sign language, you can make letters with your hands. This is called 'fingerspelling'. When you put the letters together, they make a word.

Can you fingerspell your name? Can you fingerspell your brother or sister's name? What else can you fingerspell?

## The British fingerspelling alphabet

### Right hand





## The British fingerspelling alphabet

### Left hand



# What's it like having a deaf brother or sister?

Even if you have lots of fun together, having a deaf sibling can sometimes feel difficult. It's OK to feel different things about your brother or sister. It doesn't mean you don't love them.

Here's what other children have said about their deaf brother or sister.

**They get lots of attention and I sometimes feel left out.**



**I'm worried in case they don't understand their friends.**



**I don't see my sister as a 'deaf sister' – she's simply my sister. I love her and would do anything for her.**





# Top tips for getting on with your brother or sister

1

**Keep calm.** If you feel impatient, take a deep breath and try counting to 10. Remember, your brother or sister gets fed up too.



2

If you get frustrated trying to communicate with your deaf brother or sister, try to **think how they might feel**. They're probably frustrated too!

3

**Don't cover your mouth** when you talk. Your brother or sister can't lip-read if they can't see your lips.



4

**Try to be understanding.** It's not their fault they can't hear.



5

**Make sure your face is well lit** when talking to your brother or sister. Don't stand with the light behind you or your face will be too dark to see.

6

**Be aware of background noise.** Try moving to a quiet place so your brother or sister can hear you.



7

If you're worried about something, **tell your parents or someone you trust.**

8

**Be aware of bullies.** Tell your parents or a teacher if anyone makes you or your brother or sister feel bad because they're deaf.

9

**Have fun together!** Treat them and love them like you would a hearing brother or sister. Being deaf is just one part of who they are.



**I love getting to go on trips with deaf children's groups!**

**She never complains when we're really loud at night!**

**It doesn't matter what the disability is... my brother is human, and I'll always protect him.**

# Got a problem? Why not share it?

Four siblings wrote to us with a problem they had. What do you think you would do? Talk about your ideas with your family.



My older brother is deaf and communicates through sign language. I've been told that I have to learn sign language but I don't want to. Why can't he talk like everyone else? I get stared at by people in the street and I hate it – what can I do?







**We asked a group of siblings to answer these letters. See their solutions on the next page!**





**My older brother is deaf and communicates through sign language. I've been told that I have to learn sign language but I don't want to. Why can't he talk like everyone else? I get stared at by people in the street and I hate it – what can I do?**

It can be difficult having a deaf brother or sister and knowing how to communicate with them. Talk to your parents about how you feel and tell them you're upset that people stare at you in the street. These people may not mean to upset you and are just interested in what's going on. Remember, not everyone knows what a hearing aid is or what sign language is. Make sure you look after yourself.



**I have a deaf younger sister. She gets all the attention and I can't talk to my parents because they will say I'm making this up. I don't know who to talk to – what can I do?**

You're not alone, I sometimes feel the same. Make sure you talk to your parents about how you feel. If you can't talk to them, how about making a fuzzy feeling box (go to page 28)? This will help you let them know how you feel.



**My brother is eight years old and wears two hearing aids. At school, he's in the class below me. At lunch time and break time he gets picked on and bullied. I try to stick up for him, but I don't know what to do.**



Bullying is nasty and is upsetting for the people involved. It can happen to anyone, whether you're deaf or not. You should tell a teacher at your school and your parents what's happening to your brother.

**I love my little brother more than anything. I worry all the time about how he'll hear a fire alarm or if he'll be safe around traffic because he can't hear the cars. How do I keep him safe?**

It's normal to feel protective of your brother, but it's not your responsibility to keep him safe all the time. Your parents, his teacher and other adults all know best how to keep him safe. Talk to your parents about how you're feeling. There are special fire alarms that flash or buzz to wake up deaf children when they're sleeping. Ask your parents to show you how they work.



# Activities for you and your brother or sister

Ask your parents to help you with these activities!

## Fuzzy feelings box

### What you'll need

- Shoe box
- Glue
- Tape
- Paper
- Materials to decorate the shoe box (like stickers, markers or paint)

### What to do

- 1 Decorate the shoe box.



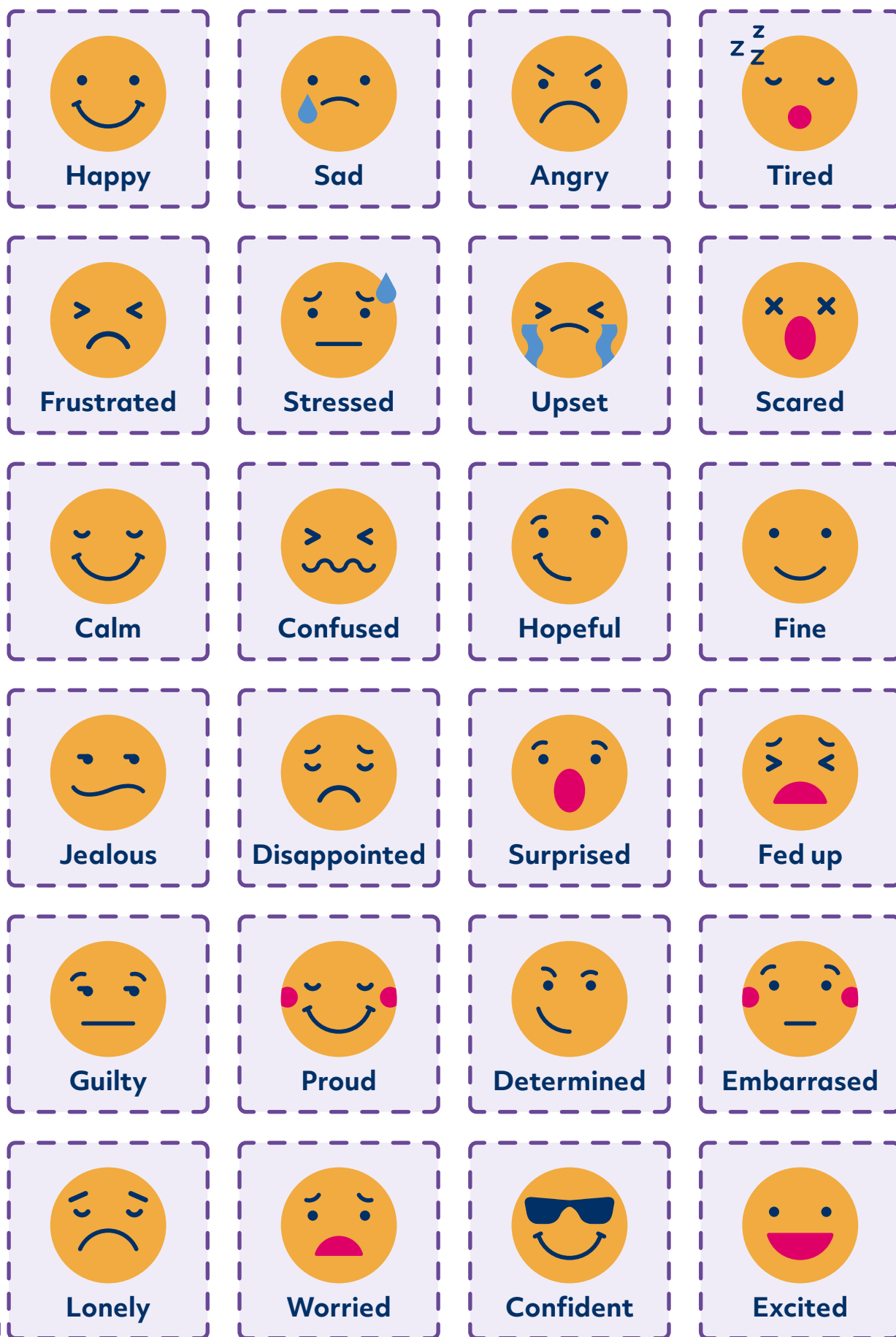
- 2 Draw a question, feeling or thought on a piece of paper and put it in the shoe box. Or you can use the cut-out cards on the next page to show how you're feeling.



- 3 Look at the cards you've put in the box with your parents.



My parents were very worried when we found out my brother was deaf. I didn't want to worry them any more. We made this box and it helped me talk to my parents more and let them know how I was feeling.



# Spot the difference

These people aren't in the same room but they're still talking to each other using the computer! What do you think they're talking about? We've hidden six differences in these two pictures. Can you spot them all?



## Make an ear

### What you'll need

- Glue or tape
- Balloons
- Toilet rolls
- Yoghurt pots
- Paper
- Scissors

### What to do

Using the resources above, can you and your family make an ear? Use the picture on page 5 to give you an idea of what an ear looks like.

I really enjoyed making the ear out of toilet roll. I wasn't sure how the ear worked and why people become deaf.



## Fingernary

### What you'll need

- Fingerspelling card (page 18)
- Score card
- List of words

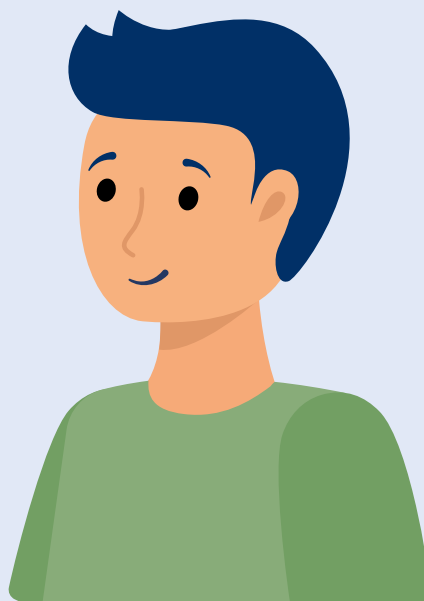
### What to do

Have you ever played Pictionary? This game is just like that, but you fingerspell words instead of drawing them!

1. Divide your group into teams and choose a games master to keep score.
2. Each round, one member of each team will be given a word by the games master.
3. When the games master says start, the person with the word will start fingerspelling it, and the teams have to guess what they're spelling.
4. The team that guesses fastest wins the point!



It was such a good game to play. I don't know much sign language, but I do now know the alphabet. Our team won!



## High five!

### What you'll need

- Crayons, markers or paint
- Paper

### What to do

1. Take a piece of paper and draw around your hand.
2. For each finger, draw or write something you like about your brother or sister.
3. In the middle of the hand, draw a happy memory you've both shared, or glue one of the cut-out cards on the next page to the palm.
4. Once you've finished, stick it to a notice board or give it to your brother or sister.

I don't always get on with my deaf sister. This was good fun to do – I will give it to her later so she knows what I think.







**We're the National Deaf Children's Society, the charity for deaf children with any level of hearing loss.**

### **Helpline**

0808 800 8880 (voice and text)  
helpline@ndcs.org.uk

**ndcs.org.uk**



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Use your smartphone's camera to scan this QR code and share your feedback on this resource.

You can also give us your feedback by emailing your comments to [informationteam@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:informationteam@ndcs.org.uk).

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