

## **ACTION DEAF YOUTH CREATING CONNECTIONS PROGRAMME**

Our 'Creating Connections' programme is a personal and social development and early help programme specifically for deaf children aged 9-13 years.

81% of deaf children that we work with attend mainstream schools where they are the only deaf child in their school. These children face significant challenges as they transition from the familiar primary school environment, where they are with the same classmates and same teacher all day every day, to an unfamiliar and usually much larger secondary school environment, where they are required to interact with a much larger number of classmates each day and lots of different teachers.

Coupled with this, once deaf children reach secondary school age they are much more self-conscious and begin to question why they are different to their peers which can lead to significant mental health issues. In fact, according to the NHS Commissioning Group 2013, 51.2% of deaf children are likely to experience mental health problems in comparison to 25% of hearing children. This means that 1 in every 2 deaf children will require mental health support.

Our Creating Connections Programme is centred around sport and recreation, creative arts, outdoor education and a very specific therapeutic intervention called Heart-to-Heart which the children participate in together with their parents/carers. The overarching objectives of the programme are to enable deaf children to widen their horizons, increase their self-esteem and build stronger connections with deaf peers, with the Deaf community and with their parents/carers.

We will do this by providing an emotionally healthy space where deaf children can relax with others who are the same - thus creating a sense of "sameness" rather than "otherness" - and where they can participate in a range of different experiences which they would usually be reluctant to participate in either by ensuring these experiences are delivered by Deaf adults who are experts in their field (e.g. Deaf sports coaches, Deaf artists, Deaf musicians) thus providing natural and inspiring role models for the children or by facilitating opportunities for them to participate in mainstream programmes with proper support.

### **Main aspects of Creating Connections Programme**

- ✓ Personal and social development programme centred around sport and recreation, creative arts, outdoor education, and wellbeing
- ✓ Specifically for deaf children most of whom attend mainstream schools and are the only deaf pupil in their school
- ✓ Aims to enable deaf children to build stronger connections with deaf peers, with the Deaf community, and with their parents/carers; and to widen their horizons

The programme will comprise:

- Weekly programme of term time activities – focused mainly on sport, art, drama, music, dance with some outdoor pursuits and cultural visits (most likely Saturday afternoons)

- 5 day summer scheme – focused mainly on outdoor pursuits and cultural visits
- 6 week Heart-to-Heart programme – for children and young people to enjoy **together with their parents/carers** based on collaborative games, creative activities and psycho-educational content delivered by ADY's in-house Play Therapist

### **Outcomes for deaf children and young people**

1. Experience enjoyment and achievement
2. Sample activities and develop interests
3. Build self-esteem and confidence
4. Build positive self-awareness and self-acceptance – particularly in relation to their deafness
5. Develop meaningful relationships
6. Develop their own identity and sense of independence
7. Develop respect for others
8. Be involved in the Deaf community
9. Acquire life skills