



# Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Amanda Fanthorpe  
Interviewed by Christine Beal

British Library ref. C1345/19

## IMPORTANT

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Oral History  
The British Library  
96 Euston Road  
London  
NW1 2DB

T: +44 (0)20 7412 7404

E: [oralhistory@bl.uk](mailto:oralhistory@bl.uk)

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## Interview Summary Sheet

**Ref no:** C1345/19

**Collection title:** Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

**Interviewee's surname:** Fanthorpe

**Title:**

**Interviewee's forename:** Amanda

**Sex:** Female

**Occupation:**

**Date and place of birth:** 1972

**Date(s) of recording:** 14<sup>th</sup> March 2009

**Location of interview:** The City Inn Hotel, Bristol

**Name of interviewer:** Christine Beal

**Speech to Text reporter:** Georgina Ford

**Type of recorder:** Marantz PMD660 on compact flash

**Recording format :** WAV 16 bit 48 kHz

**Total no. of tracks:** **Mono or stereo:** stereo

**Total Duration:** 1 hr. 51 min.

**Additional material:**

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**Interviewer's comments:**

**[Track 1]**

*This is Christine Beal interviewing Amanda Bolton on 14th March for the Unheard Voices Project in Bristol. The speech-to-text reporter is Georgina Ford. Right, okay. So can I have your full name Amanda*

My maiden name.

*Both.*

I was Amanda Jane Bolton but I kept my married name I got divorced three years ago. It takes about -- well, it took a year to come through so technically we split up four years ago, it took about a year for my divorce to come through. I'm Amanda Jane Fanthorpe my maiden name is Bolton. Sorry, but I've kept Fanthorpe because the children I don't want to confuse the children. I might go back to Bolton when I'm older. It's too complicated to change everything over and your details and your bank details, this, that and the other.

*Can I have your date and place of birth.*

Born in Edgware, Middlesex, March 31st 1972.

*Your mother's occupation and father's occupation.*

My Mum was a hairdresser and my Dad was a printer.

*Would you like to tell me some of your sort of personal details, your background, the history of like your childhood, you know, your grandparents if you can remember them, any brothers and sisters.*

I've got one brother. He's older, he's two years older than me. I've got a very big family because my Mum's got, I think, 5 sisters and two brothers and they've all got children and those children have got children and we always get together and we've got a big family. I was born deaf. My brother later was diagnosed with -- not diagnosed, they picked up that he was

autistic but much later when he was a teenager too late to do anything then. They didn't find out I was deaf until I was 18 months old.

*Right. What's your brother's name.*

My brother's name is Russell. I don't get on with my brother. I used to get on with him when I was a child but when he left home, a lot of bad things happened in one year and had a sort of a break down and since then he's not been the same person and he's got a chip on his shoulder about everything and he blamed my parents. If anything's wrong, he blames my parents where my parents brought us up how any parent should, but he can't remember the good bits. He only remembers the bad bits and he's on medication and I can't have a conversation with him because he likes to blow everything out of proportion. You can have a hello, it's a lovely day and then it will go from a lovely day, British weather, blah, blah, blah, and it will go on and on.

*Did you get on with him as a child?*

I did. We were just brother and sister, did everything together on our bikes, just a little turn sort of that year of bad luck where he was robbed by the people that he lived with, like they shared a house, the rent money was -- they hadn't paid the last rent money and he paid for them, the two brothers, and then when it came to them owing it for the following month, they disappeared and they ran sacked his room, took a view things, you know, like turned the mattress over, did a bit of damage. So my brother yet again had to pay their rent again and they disappeared. So he had all that badluck and also his tools got nicked for his job so he couldn't do his job. All sorts of things and it all got on top of him. Also he's smoking whacky backy and that didn't help.

*But you did get on well as children.*

We did. We did have quarrels like siblings do but we got on, yes. It's a shame.

*Where did you grow up?*

I grew up in Edgware Middlesex. We lived in a three-bedroomed house, big garden and we had pets like rabbits, budgies, guinea pigs, the usual thing. My grandparents lived five doors away and that's where my Dad grew up and my Dad grew up in the same street as I did. I haven't got any grandparents left. My Mum's Dad lived in Kingsbury and he's the most recent one that passed away. He passed away was it a year ago ... I think it was last ... I can't remember. Not last ...yes, because we're in 2009 now. He passed away in 2007 at the end of 2007. So it's been a full year. He gave his body up for medical science because he worked in the medical corp or something in India, somewhere like that in the army and he was one of the ... what's that person that aness --

*Anaesthetic.*

Anaesthetist or something. I don't know whether you can spell that. That's it, yeah. And it's funny because my son did a project on World War II or world war something, World War II and my Mum got all this stuff out and I saw a picture of my grandpa when he was a young man with the old gowns on and that and all the men round the operating obviously with war wounds you know people that have been shot or. Because he was so interested in the medical side when my nan passed away he did a lot for the hospital. He became a guinea pig and he'd get picked up maybe once a month and he would sit in bed while all these junior doctors come round and they did I don't know and they did their training and he was the guinea pig. So when he'd done his donor thing he wanted to go to medical science so he could help with medical sort of things. He was a good man, very good man my grandpa.

*Interesting.*

He's from a Jewish -- his family was all Jewish but he didn't marry a Jewish -- my nan wasn't Jewish but all his brothers and sisters were -- some of them branched off or Orthodox Jews but my grandpa didn't really go --well, maybe when he was a young man he probably did go to the synagogue and all that but you wouldn't know he was Jewish because some Jewish people they like do like Passover and all this but he didn't do that. He didn't have any religion whatsoever. He had a big family and he worked in a handbag factory doing handbags, making handbags and stuff for many years..

*Going back, did you have a good schooling?*

I found school very hard, very hard.

*Was that because of your hearing?*

Because of my hearing, yes. When they found out --it wasn't my parents that found out I was deaf it was my grandpa who lived up the road because he noticed when I was a baby I wasn't responding to sound and my brother was and he said you should get that checked out and my Mum said she thought something was up, got me checked out and found out that I was deaf and I started going to the Nuffield in London Gray's Inn Road ear, nose and throat -- I don't know which way round, they keep changing it. Started going there since I was 18 months and go there every year for check ups, hearing aids, blah, blah, blah.

*Was there any particular reason did they find for the hearing loss?*

No. A lot of hearing loss or hearing deafness is unknown. They don't know what caused it. So mine was unknown but later on my grandpa that gave his body up, I think it was him that said to my Mum or I don't know which grandpa said that someone in the family he remembers when he was young that there was an aunt or someone who was deaf, didn't speak. Deaf and dumb they called it then. I don't know..

*So it could have been hereditary.*

It could have been a gene. I could go and have tests and find out if I've got a gene but... you know, if it is a gene we're all carriers in the family but I've just got the defective gene. It just came out. So my children have got the gene but they are carrying it. Their hearing's fine but there could be someone further down the tree that has that defective gene.

*So did you find it difficult at school then?*

Very difficult at school.

*In what way?*

I was an outcast because I went to -- when my Mum -- well, when I was found out when they found out that I was deaf they put me in like a pre-nursery school and I had speech therapy and all this lot before I went into nursery and then primary, junior schools. So from a very early age I was made to -- it was very regimented and I was frustrated, I couldn't communicate. I was a very -- at the time they thought I was very naughty but it wasn't, it was the fact that I couldn't -- I couldn't communicate, I couldn't understand. So I used to bite the teachers. I used to bite them, pull their earrings, used to run and hide under tables. They used to have a room and put me in this room where I'd go mad, have a paddy, have a tantrum like a 2-year old. Put me in a room. I can't remember the room but my Mum was telling me about it. They had to put me in there to get me to calm down because they weren't getting anywhere. I had to be in a separate room, calm down and then stuff like that. It was ...

*Did you have any friends?*

I had a few deaf friends at -- I can only remember the school that I met Andrew at Seeder and Harrow because it was a normal -- I say normal, it was a hearing school with a deaf unit and there was probably about ten/15 deaf children and there's about 2 or 300 hearing children and then we were integrated into the school with support teachers and things like that. I can't remember if they had

*What age was that?*

I was at that school from the age of 4, 4 or 5, and I had this loop-system as well which was a big heavy box, not like the little things you have now, a big heavy box that I had to carry around. I couldn't carry it. It was heavy and the teacher had a big thing that they wore and a lot of the time I spent in the hearing unit because we couldn't -- we sit at the front of the class but we still have to have the extra lessons in the hearing unit. I didn't mix in with the hearing kids. I felt I didn't mix in very -- I mixed in with my own kind. I don't mean to say it like that but I felt --

*How many were there that were deaf then in this unit?*

There was probably only three in my year but in the whole school there was probably 10 or 15 in different years but I bumped into -- before I went through my divorce I bumped into Ravit

who got me back in touch with Andrew and she was in the year below me. But I don't remember anybody in the school in my class, remember everybody in the hearing unit all different ages which it's just I remember them. I remember the tall skinny one called Iain and I remember the short one called Hadley. I remember them all.

*So did the other children -- were they unkind to you then because of*

I don't know. I didn't understand them. I can't explain. I couldn't follow what ... you know, you try and join in but you can't understand and you just get cast away. So what they did because the school playground was separated girls were in one playground the boys in another, because the majority of the deaf children were boys, there was only about two or three girls or 4 girls, we were allowed to go in the boys' playground and play with the deaf boys. We wouldn't play with anybody else, we'd only play with our group and do stuff like there was a massive willow tree.. I bump into people now do you remember that willow tree, we used to play ghost train, we used to hold on to our hips and go through the trees and the people at the back had to close their eyes and the tree would just hit you in the face. It was good fun. They are things you do as a kid. I remember one boy called Alan spiff and Andrew will remember him he always told stories and you didn't believe a word he said, he just told stories, lies, lies, I got this and got that, we went up this you know. Alan's going off on one again. He used to make terrible stories.

*Were you at this unit as well for junior school and senior school? Was it the same school?*

Funny enough my parents took me out of that school when I was about 7, 7 or 8, because they weren't very happy because they didn't know -- the school didn't know where I was some of the time because I used to go from the -- it was a middle school and a lower school and I used to go off, tell me teacher I got to go down to the unit in the lower to get batteries and I wasn't down there, I was hiding in the loo or they didn't know where I was. They never keep track on you. I remember one boy leaving the school, wandering off, Jamie Waters. He was a bit of a handful but he just wandered off and my parents found out all this. My Mum said to me one day what did you do today? I said in the morning I was standing on the toilet for a little while because I had the door open Mum because if I stand on the floor Mum they'll see my feet when they come in and they check under the doors, you see Mum. I was six telling her that I was standing on the toilet because I hated school so much. I

didn't want to be in the class. I liked being in the hearing unit but didn't want to be in the school. I was scared of the teachers, I was ... they just tell you off all the time. It's because you couldn't follow what's going on. They didn't have the patience. But the hearing teachers were great but they had to put us, integrate us into the school to get us prepared for later because the hearing world is a hearing world, you have to fit in. Well, that's what my parents thought. But in the end they took me out the school. A little while later Andrew's parents took him out of that school as well. They weren't happy. So my Mum and Dad managed to get a grant or something or wrote to the Prime Minister or something like that and managed to get a support teacher for me to finish off at a local school which my brother went to, it was Deansbrook school round the corner from home and I had I remember I had a Greek support teacher who had a terrible accent and I couldn't follow. But I got on really well at the school because I knew some of the children from the neighbourhood because I knew it was round the corner and my brother went to that school. I didn't feel so miles away from home, don't know anybody.

*Was it -- so you finished off at the senior school.*

I finished off at the middle school. I didn't actually finish the last two years so I went to do two years at Deansbrook, the local school with the support teacher, and she went in all my classes. She was with me and also we had extra reading speech thing. So after Deansbrook my Mum and Dad were looking for a school with a hearing unit a secondary school and they got me into Hendon school which was a bit of a trek. So there was like a deaf taxi. I call it a deaf taxi but picked up all the deaf kids, took them to school and on the way was a Peter Johnson. There used to be Ben Lee. I got back in touch with them through Friends Reunited. I got back in touch with a load of deaf friends but I can't remember any hearing friends. I can't remember them. It's the deaf ones that I remember. It's unusual. There's only a few of them but ... you meet loads of people at school and I only remember them. We got a lot in common. That's probably why.

*The equipment which you had then you said you had this –*

As I got older, the equipment got better and better but it still cut you out from the class. You could hear the teacher and nobody else. So if the teacher says something funny you think it's funny but you don't know if the class is laughing or someone's put their hand up and said

something. You don't hear any of that you just hear the teacher talking so it's kind of like -- also it was robotic.. It wasn't normal. The speech wasn't normal. It was very robotic then. So it was hard, hard to mix in and also some children were cruel. You get that everywhere with anything. You can have freckles, glasses, funny hair or knock knees, big feet. They all pick on you but when I was young I had sort of like you just learn to adapt. You have to. Stay away from those ones. Then you toughen up. At one stage it was a point of anybody hurt me and upset me, I'd fight back but you get in trouble for that.

*So how did you -- did you use the equipment at home or you just managed?*

When I was at home my Mum had head phones, big old fashioned head phones to plug into the television. There's a picture of me and my brother this far away from the telly, little black and white telly, that far away with it with the head phones watching cartoons and there's my brother. So it wasn't much equipment then. I only watched cartoons. There wasn't much for me to watch. Even when I was old I watched Tom and Jerry and Top Cat and all that but -- Top Cat was a bit difficult because it's all talking but you get the gist from the animation of it, mainly cartoons. That's why I'm a bit funny. I tell jokes and a bit later on the subtitles started in probably the mid-1980s, a few shows had the subtitles, started watching things, Blue Peter, things like that. Brilliant. Then now everything's got subtitles and it's ... now computer, Internet. I'm in touch with all my friends. So before I was very much kept myself to myself and used to write a lot. Pen pals, I had pen pals. My brother had hundreds of friends and I had no friends and I used to do a lot of art, doodle, spend all my time in my room, didn't have anybody to play with. I know it's sad but that's how it was..

*You had your own bedroom.*

I had my own room, yeah. So I spent a lot of time in my room. I played with my dolls, did lots of art. My brother used to -- he used to let me tag along with his friends, his group of friends but I never really understood what was going on. But I just tagged along. I was like a little tag along. They used to do things. Because I was little and because I was hard of hearing they used to say you've got to do this, you've got to do that, you've got to swing across there and then you can come with us. But if you don't do it, you can't come and play with us. They used to dare me to do things, dangerous things. So like there was a stream used to swing across and walk along that wall there and jump off there.

*So did you -- when you left education, did you go on to Further Education?*

I did. Because all the art I really enjoyed art. I went on to Barnet college and did three years there. I did one year because I didn't know where, which part of art I wanted to go into. So I did it was a first diploma in art and design which was photography, fashion, ceramics, life drawing, everything, everything. I loved it. I learnt how to do like develop film, how to use those cameras.. I can't remember now ... and we did fashion. We did design clothes and actually make the clothes. That was good. And we had a fashion show. I enjoyed that but that was for one year and I decided it was graphic design that I wanted to go into, you know, packaging design, shop front design, leaflets, posters, everything in front of your face that's advertising everything. I did that but the problem was I had a real struggle doing that course because I had the worst teacher any deaf person can have.

*In what sense?*

In the sense that he had no patience for someone with a disability. He had an accent I don't know where he was from. It might have been Scottish, Welsh, Irish. I mean, I find it very hard -- very hard to follow northern accents and I can follow some parts of America. They have a drawl and they don't rush their words, they talk long and take their time whereas some Americans they, blah, blah, blah, they talk really fast and I haven't got a clue what they are saying. Same with Irish. Some Irish people speak very quickly and it all joins up and it distorts -- it's distorted to me but not to them of course. I don't know where my teacher was from but he had no patience with me, he lost his temper all the time, he frightened the hell out of me and then he said you're going to fail this course, why are you doing this, why are you doing that, you can't work in the dark room, you can't understand what we're saying, blah, blah, blah, put me down, put me down. My work was good and but he put me down he made it difficult for me. In the end I told my Mum and Dad and broke down. I said I'm going to fail because there's lots of -- we went on lots of lectures about artists and about this, about that and he would tell you what your project would be and I wouldn't understand it and then I'd go and ask him what do you mean by this and he would go off on one at me and I ended up with no clue what I'm supposed to do. So I used to rely on another boy in the class Abraham Abe. He lives in America now. He was like a big brother. He would go through it with me but I still needed help. In the end I was told that I wasn't going to pass. I can pass with this part of

the course but I won't pass with that. So my Mum and Dad fought and fought and managed to get me a three month extension with a support teacher and he came in and it was one to one, explained what I had to do and, blah, blah, blah, and I passed.

*What age were you then?*

I was at college from the age of 16-18, 16, 17, 18. That man if I ever saw him again ... he was horrible. He was a nasty man. You know. I don't know how he was able to become a teacher. He was horrible.

*Were you the only deaf person at the college?*

Yes, I was the only deaf person in the college. So that was very hard -- very hard. I was determined to do well because when you have got a disability people only take half of you, they don't take -- you've got to work hard at it to show something like anything, you know, you have to work harder. It's like following any conversation. It's not just like that it's, you know, your face is just like a puzzle -- I mean I got so many wrinkles here, I'll have to go and get botox I think when I'm older. I must keep reminding myself not to frown.

*What was your social life like then after college?*

I had one friend from school who was in like a crowd. You get a crowd or a gang and she was in the gang and there was like you get these people at the top and then she just follows and they used to pick on me, but she was one that wouldn't and she would stick up for me and in the end she used to sit next to me in class and if I'd miss something she used to say no, no, that's wrong, it's this, blah, blah, blah. So she was my little support. She didn't know it, I didn't know it at the time but she got me through some of the hard bits at school.

*Looking back.*

Yes. She went to a different college. We lost touch a little bit. We still wrote to each other, we still met up but I didn't see much of her. She was doing secretarial stuff and she now

works for a council and she does all this PA personal assistant this, she's doing well, but we kind of lost touch since she got married we lost touch a bit. Fallen out. Best friends do they fall out all the time. We're not talking at the moment.

*Did you belong to any sort of deaf clubs?*

I did, I did, I did. My Mum did her best to put me in with the hearing world. She put me in Brownies, ballet, tap dance, I went to Girl Guides, I went to wood craft folk and I was only in them for a short while. I wasn't happy. She tried to get me to be happy and mix in but I couldn't. But I did enjoy it while -- I learnt a few things, got a few badges in Brownies like doing an old lady's shopping, making cakes you know. I liked it and also in Brownies especially I might have stayed there the longest because my tawny owl she was deaf as well and it was good.. This was in Mill Hill and my tawny owl was deaf and she sympathised and was more patient with me than the usual. I enjoyed it for a short while and I don't remember any other Brownies. You know what I mean when you meet people. I only remember the people the tawny owl, the deaf tawny owl or the deaf children at school.

*So it was more the deaf people --*

The ones I mixed in with although as I got older I did make friends with people at work. I suppose when you're a child you kind of like give up and just get on just being on your own but when you're an adult other adults they are not told if they take the Mick don't do this and you are an adult yourself they don't treat you badly, don't treat you like a child. Adults are more understanding when you're an adult than an adult and a child sort of thing when you're deaf. I can't explain. So I had more hearing friends as an adult than I did when I was a child. At this time by the time you were 18 had you had much to do with the hospitals at all? I had appointments every year, I think twice a year or maybe more. I had regular hearing tests to keep an eye on my hearing, I had regular ear moulds. My Mum used to go and get my batteries for me because it was local hospital Edgware for the batteries but go for ear moulds and check ups near King's Cross Station Gray's Inn Road, the Nuffield ear nose throat or whatever.

*When you were say 18 did you still have the carrying --*

I didn't. That was only at school, only at school I only had the loop-system at school because when I got older they brought out some places had that loop. That was very new then so it was all in the works but I didn't want anybody to know that I was deaf because they treated me differently. They got to know me first, they treated me just like them, their friends. So I used to hide it and pretend I was following the conversation and do a lot of bluffing and laugh when they laughed and look at their faces and their body language and then just copy them and then the group to get by like that. I made a couple of friends a college I do remember. I got back in touch with them on Facebook and Friends Reunited. But at school I just remember all the deaf children. I don't remember the hearing people very much hardly. I can't remember names. But I remember nearly everybody. It's just amazing that I can remember them. And silly details like what they used to wear and I think it's because you pick up on those things, you're more visual, you spend a lot of time looking at things because you don't hear. Your senses are different, I suppose.

*What about boy friends and that at that age?*

I had a few boyfriends. I was a pretty thing then, slim and pretty. I had one boyfriend I didn't understand a word he said but we went to the cinema and things like that and I just followed him around for about three months. He was a swimmer. I was in a swimming club so I was the only deaf kid in the swimming club and I did galas and everything like that and the instructor told the people that were running these competitions that she's deaf, you have to go like that [indicated] rather than go or whatever. So I used to start my races facing the other way. Everybody's gone, I'm looking okay oh and quickly catch up, all catching up. And a lot of people have dived in. But sometimes you can look and then they've gone like that and then you dive in but you're always a few seconds out.

*Did you ever win anything?*

I did.. I got a silver. I got a silver medal for coming second and a medal for taking part and we had things like you have to dress up in pajamas and do a race in your pajamas. It was good fun. I love swimming. I love it. I don't do it now so much but I don't get much time but I love swimming. I'm too afraid that people will come up to me and say something and I won't hear them but when I was a kid I absolutely loved it, my own world. Yes, I love swimming. So I had a few boyfriends. It wasn't until I met Andrew that I realised that I

should be with a deaf person. I don't mean to be horrible to the hearing people but I can't explain. I get on better with him because he understands. Yeah, his deafness is different to mine because we were both deaf from birth but his deafness he lost it all later when he was an adult. So he's got a lot more frustrations than I have and he loses his temper very quickly. So his character has changed a lot from when I knew him. Of course he's an adult now, he's not a kid but I can see why because if you've lost something, you had something before and you're not following ... he had to keep reminding me sometimes and he gets cross that I'm babbling and he's still talking because he forgets that I'm deaf sometimes and I didn't realise he was still talking. I thought he stopped. Things like that, little things. We do have our little ups and downs like anyone but I find that I get on with him better than any of my boy friends I've ever had. My ex-husband was very good at the beginning because his Mum was deaf. His Mum had an accident when she was a young girl she fell off a horse and had brain bleeding or something and she lost all the hearing in one ear and she only had a little bit of hearing in her other ear. So from having a deaf Mum he was more understanding with me, more patient. Our marriage deteriorated because he was living two how can I say? He lived a bit of a lie -- well, it was a big lie actually.

*Going back first of all, so after you left the college before obviously you got married and that what sort of work did you do.*

Oh, yes. I left college after passing my BTEch national diploma in graphic design and I got a job local to where I live and I got a job in Mill Hill in a printers and that's where I met my husband. He was a printer and he got on with my Dad because he's a printer, my brother's a printer. So it's all printers in the family and I was there. I worked in the art department upstairs. I was a paste up artist. Back then you paste up rather than it being printed -- we did use computers but not as much in those days. That was in 91 -- 1990/91. There was a couple of computers in the office but now if you go in splash printing I've been there and there's loads of computers, everything's done on computers you know. In the old days it was paste up work where you get a lot of guar gum.

*So it was cutting and gluing.*

Yes and I worked in a dark room where we developed the plates that went on the press and you have to have the exposure and the light came down on to the metal plate and it burns an

image on the plate and then the plate goes through the chemicals and then the ink only sticks to the areas that's been developed do you know what I mean? Or the areas that hasn't been burnt or something like that. I can't remember which way round it.

*That's quite technical.*

That's where I worked in the dark room. So I did plate making paste up work cups of coffee and tea and swept up as you do when you are a junior. I was there for a year and then because I was only a junior and the last one in, they were getting rid of staff, I was the first one out. So I didn't mind because the job was not really what I wanted to go into. It was just the first job out of college, earn some money. My first wage packet: exciting. So after I left then, did something totally different: became a care assistant.. I went into nursing. I don't know why but I used to belong to a club when I was a young girl. It was in Harrow. It was the Bentley day centre and on a weekend on a Saturday it was all children with disabilities, girl that was blind, guy in a wheelchair, I say girl and guy I mean boys, girls and there was a girl that had a slight bit of Down's Syndrome. My Mum used to put me in this club because she wanted me to do stuff like my brother was in cubs and stuff and she wanted me to mix in. So as I grew up I started being one of the helpers. I swapped roles. I started helping out and all the little kids that come in and I used to get them to play and make them drink and like a little kid's club. I remembered that I really enjoyed that. I got satisfaction making people happy and whatever disability you've got, so I went into care work, became a care assistant. I was there for about four years and I looked after -- they were all adults, young adults that parents couldn't look after them any more, all different disabilities from Down's, learning difficulties and things like that. One guy blind and deaf Donald he was brilliant. Every time he walked past he could feel you come he'd grab your leg, pull you of and start trying to say something on your hand like a Makaton thing and it's usually meaning I want a cigarette or I want something to eat or something like that or I want a drink or I think he used to have sight because he start doing know boys and Indians in his head and you know mimics a gun and pretends to shoot everybody and does this Indian lol-lol-lol so obviously had sight as a child and lost his sight later. But he can't hear anything and spends all day knitting and then when he's finished knitting undoes it all and any bits that break off he ties together so his wool is a mass of different colours. The ball of wool is all different colours from all the years of knitting the same ball of wool. He'd spend all day doing that. So I looked after these people, all different characters. I found every day exciting because every day something different

happened. There's always a drama. Someone climbing out the window or someone taking the food out the fridge at night. I was on night sometimes and I caught her and I said what you doing what are you doing she turned round and her boobs were out here. I said what's that? Nothing. I said have you taken the rolls out the fridge? No. And she's put them in her bra. So she's nicking food and putting it in her bra. I used to have to set booby traps up because I couldn't hear when they came out their room. So I take the cutlery out the kitchen and they had holes at the top and I'd put string and tie them on the doors so they would drop on the floor and I'd hear a clunk all the big knives -- not knives, big ladles and spoons things like that.

*So it was a job you were happy in.*

I really enjoyed it. Maybe because I felt that I was doing something for people that are worse off than me.

*So at that time did doing that job having no hearing did that make it difficult.*

It made it hard, it did. It made it hard because some of the residents spoke to me and I never - well, I found it hard to follow because they had trouble speaking themselves. I found the communication side of it very difficult but after a while they got to know me and I got to know them. I got to know the signs and facial -- you get to know what they are like.

*Read body language.*

Yes you get show that he wants this and she wants that, oh she wants me to do this for her. You get used to what they -- they do very similar things every day. I mean, there was one lady that kept saying where's my pussy, pussy, where my pussy gone and I never understood what she said. After a while one of the staff said she wants her pussy cat, that fluffy toy thing she's got and then from then onwards I knew -- it was like a little stuffed Teddy that was a cat and she used to have it on her lap and she forgets to bring it with her from her room, she's going puss, puss where are you I know it's strange. I used to go and get it. Oh pussy cat and then she'll talk to her cat. I know it sounds odd but it comforts her.

*So you were in a job really that you --*

I enjoyed that job. Other people were worse off and you were in a caring capacity. I felt like I was giving something. I don't like to think I'm a sad case. I don't want to be -- I always thought -- I don't know. I don't want to be thought of as somebody that's ... I can't explain it.. I try but. I like helping out. It makes me forget about my own problems and that's after I left there and got married to my husband --

*You said you met your husband at the printers.*

I met him in the print trade, yes.

*So you were going out with him while you were at the --*

I was going out with him and then I left there and I was still going out with him and we got on really well because his Mum was deaf. So he was more patient than some boyfriends that I've had and thought maybe this is the one, this is the guy that I'm going to marry and have kids with and I got married and had kids with him. It wasn't until later it didn't work out. But when I left the care assistant job I had, what happened was we actually moved house and it was too far for me to travel and I did shift work and had to be there at 7 in the morning and things like that and I found it very stressful in the end because they were cutting back on staff and because of my deafness I found it was dangerous. There was say about 12 residents and there should be three carers. Sometimes they left you just on your own and if something went wrong over there I wouldn't know. So I found it so stressful then and because I moved I said I'm going to have to leave because it's going to make me ill. I'll get a job nearer home. I didn't get the same sort of job, I went and worked in an office as an office assistant and I ended up being the person -- they get loads of faxes from dentists and on the fax would be the orders or all the things they wanted for their dentist like to do with drill bits and things and teeth and I worked on the monitor, I worked on the computer, and I worked where I they had their account number put their account number in, I put in their order like a shopping order, put it through, send it through to the warehouse and then invoice the customer. So I was basically invoicing and then crediting. I was doing that for a while. Then I got pregnant. My husband wanted me to leave my job and be a Mum. So I was a Mum for seven years, six years.

*What year did you have your first child?*

I had my first one in -- I got married in 97, had my first child in 98, very difficult birth, very scary.

*Was that boy or girl?*

It was my son Oliver. He's now ten. I found it very difficult. The midwives were great with me.. There were a couple that spoke clearly, there was a couple that I couldn't understand so I chose -- I told them that if it comes to when I'm going into labour I want either one of you to come on shift because if it's --I'm going to be what's going on. I need someone that speaks clearly. The lady over there, she's got a strong accent I'm going to be all -- I won't know what's going on. So they were very good to me. I had a very good midwife but it was traumatic because like any first baby, some people they are in labour for a long, long time and you get tired and you're in a lot of pain and you just want the baby to get out. So that was hard. In the end I had the ventouse so my son had a swollen head and jaundice and so ...I had post natal depression but didn't tell anybody, kept it quiet and I was ill for a long time afterwards, anaemic and everything like that and I was very depressed and no-one to talk to.

*Did you --*

I found that very hard.

*Did you find it difficult then as he was --obviously the difficulties with the birth but also obviously when the baby's crying and things like that how did you --*

I had like a social work -- no, I think the midwife got in touch with somebody the century team or something that area they came round and gave me like a shake awake baby alarm type thing but it was a nightmare. It went off even when the baby went (sighs) it went off. Flash and vibrate, go and have a look to see if the baby's all right, it's asleep. When the baby was screaming its head off -- they have improved a lot since then but the one I had was rubbish. So I hardly slept for about a year. So literally every time I felt something was up I got up and had a look, got up and had a look, so I was a zombie for about a year. My relationship with my husband was awful then. He slept downstairs. He didn't help me out at all.

*I was going to ask you was he good with the baby.*

He was terrible. He was a nightmare. In the end, I nearly fell apart and my Mum had a word with him and said why don't you for Amanda's sake otherwise you know will you every Friday you have the baby Friday night and she sleeps Friday night and has a lay in and that saved me because that was a night I didn't have to worry about feeding the baby or waking up to check because I was up and up and you always get that mother instincts and the instincts were on all the time and I was always checking to see if he was breathing, put my hand on its chest and that I disturb it and he was the worst baby, he screamed and cried all the time, couldn't put him down. He had bad colic and everything.

*So what's the age difference between Oliver and the next child?*

I had Emily about 20 months later.

*So quite quick.*

Emily best baby ever. Thank goodness for that. By the time I had Emily I managed to get Oliver sleeping through the night. So he was like 19/20 months old. It took me that long to get him to sleep through the night. So I thought I'd better get this sorted by the time I have this one otherwise I am going to be a mess. So I had to do a lot of research. I read lots of baby books and then I read somewhere that routine helps and also I went to see a cranial osteopath. I went seven times and after that he was sleeping through the night. Because he had a troublesome birth, it had something to do with the alignment in the bones and stuff. It messes about with the alignment and the wind gets trapped in their stomachs and makes them get colic and scream and go stiff. He used to go stiff like a bird. A little tiny baby then all of a sudden be stiff and I'd think he die. His head used to be bright red and screaming. But with Emily she hardly cried at all. She was -- Oliver was a 7.1 pounds, she was 9.2 pounds and basically knew what was going to happen because I'd been through labour before but didn't think it would be that quick because we got to the hospital the midwife said oh you've got ages yet do you want to go and get something to eat in he hotel -- not hotel, in the hospital cafeteria so we went and I was having contractions and having to stand up and then carry on eating and then when the contraction came I had to stand up and sit down again because you could feel it more when you're sitting down and oh, I think I'm ready to go back now. So that

was an hour later, went back and I was getting upset, it was getting painful and midwife said you can't be ready yet, we'll check. Oh, yes you are ready, not too late to have an epidural. So I get the epidural but it was a mobile one so I was able to get up. Within an hour it must have been within two hours not three days like the other one and I said my legs are moving why are they doing that why are they doing look my legs are moving and it was the baby's head. She said the baby's head you want to push. I said what do you want me to push what now. She said yeah now.

*Was that better with your hearing loss then? Were they much nicer to you second time round at the hospital or?*

I think because I was more relaxed knowing what happens when you go into labour all these things happen because I'd been through it you have now experienced it already, you're not scared what's happening, what's this, what's that, you know. I think I was more relaxed about because it was the second time. If it was the first time I would have been like what's going on you know. She came out and she came out after two pushes. Blimey and I was aware of what's going on whereas before I had my eyes shut, I was screaming what's going on.

*So second time round you found it a lot --*

Easier. And because she had an easy delivery she was content she slept through at 5 weeks. She slept through the night. I couldn't believe it. So I had Oliver and Emily sleeping through the night. Thank God.

*What about the third child.*

My third one I had complications. I had fine pregnancy. I had actually between Emily and Henry I had a miscarriage and I found that very scary because what happened was I was bleeding, I was about three months gone, I was bleeding and I had to ring because I'm not very good on the phone I had to ring my husband at work. I can only speak to my Mum or my husband. So they got in touch with the doctor's. The doctor's sent an ambulance because I was telling Danny my ex-husband that when I sit down I'm fine when I stand up it gushes out, gushing out all over the floor and I had little Emily, I had little Oliver and, you know, oh wow what do I do. I was panicking on my own at home. So my ex-husband said I'll sort it out. He

told me to tell the neighbour the lady that lives next door to come in, call her, she looked after the kids, ambulance came, I went in the ambulance, I was petrified didn't have a clue what was going on. I was in hospital for three days because I had -- first of all, they said it's all got to come out. They gave me pethidine for the pain because I was screaming in pain and it was day two that a big bit came out, it was -- that was scary but the thing is I kept asking the staff what's going on and nobody would explain anything. I couldn't have anything -- I wasn't allowed to see my children because you are on ward ... it was awful awful.

*Do you think you were treated any different because of your deafness or --*

They didn't -- they didn't take that into account.

*Okay, you weren't --*

I felt like I was dying, no-one's telling me what's going on, I was losing all this blood and the pain relief they didn't give that to me until I was on the floor crawling along. I was crying and my ex-husband came in and saw me like this. But he had to go and find somebody and then eventually a doctor did come and eventually he said you can have pain relief and I wasn't aware that I could have it. But after the pethidine I was able to sleep and in the night I passed a big clot, huge and then I had to have a D & C. So I go under and I find that scary because I haven't got my hearing aids on when I come round, you know. So that's scary, scary, scary. I been through it all and then after that I said no more children. I'm not having any more children after that, after I had -- I had the -- then I got -- no no, it wasn't then. It was after Henry I said didn't want any more children because after I'd lost this one I felt that I had to replace the one I lost so I had Henry.

*What year.*

I had him in 2003 which was about a year or maybe six or seven months -- I fell pregnant about six months after my miscarriage. They said give it time for your body to get back to normal. So it was about 6 months and I had Henry in the January 2003 and everything was fine, I went into labour, blah, blah, blah, and then got to the hospital and a little while later all my fluid started and in the fluid was bright green and it was the machomium, the baby's first poo. They are not supposed to do it until they get out and what that means is the baby's

distressed and they listened up and everything and strapped me up and said the baby, every time you contract your baby's heart beat drops and it's gone, then it comes back again. So they thought the cord was wrapped round him so every time I contracted it was pulling. So they said we're going to have to take you straight in for a caesarean because you're so far and we have to get you in quick we'll have to put you to sleep. No, no, no hang on a minute that wasn't right. They took me in and they'd given me epidural but it hadn't worked. I could feel them cutting me. I felt burning. I couldn't see what they were saying because they all had those masks on. My husband was there and I could see his eyes and I could see him looking puzzled and I was screaming and saying tell them to stop, sue them, sue them. I was confused. Tell them to stop. They are cutting me and when they all looked at each other I could see them looking at each other realising I could feel them and then they had to put me to sleep. They sent him out. I was going what's going on and it was like a big fight. That was scary. I thought I'm going to die, dying. So I went to sleep. They put me to sleep. I didn't even know what was going on. They were just grabbing me like a piece of meat. It wasn't very nice. It was like a struggle. I don't remember it because I was asleep. But I remember coming round, looking on my side like this looking and I can see my husband sitting right over there with the little wrap and all I was concerned about what is it, what is it then and I didn't have my hearing aids on. What is it then, what is it, what is it, and he's going, it's a boy, a boy.

*I was going to say how do your children cope with your deafness? Obviously --*

They don't -- they've always seen me like this so they don't know the difference. They do -- I mean, I have to keep reminding my little one Henry, he's very quiet and he talks like this talking down at the floor and I have to keep moving his head. I've hurt my foot, I've hurt my foot and I'm what look up here. He wants to look down there at his foot and I have to keep telling him keep your head here and then point and don't look down. What have you done? It's hard and he gets frustrated. With my first son he didn't speak very much when he was small. I think it's probably because I didn't speak much and he was a late speaker but he's all right now. They've all had hearing tests they are all fine they've got their Dad's hearing and my daughter is my I say my support. She goes round repeating what everybody said, if I've missed something she comes and tells me.. Sometimes she tells me when I don't need to be told.. I say I know I heard that bit understood that bit. She's like -- she's grown up to be she's almost like my interpreter. She's just grown up to be like that. Sometimes I find it a little bit

annoying but I have to try and remember she's doing it because she's helping me out but sometimes I find it a little bit shush.

*Kindness but ...*

I mean the other day Emily came up to me and said the doctor just asked you something Mum. Oh, sorry what was that, you know. My daughter if I've missed something she spots it and then she will get my attention and carry on from there sort of thing. So she's going to be great when she grows. She's going to be great support.

*So do you think it's made them more obviously aware of people with disabilities.*

Yes I think so. Yes, they are very good. In the school they get on with everybody in the school and my daughter is a mediator. They made her a mediator, a person that if the children fighting that put Emily there to sort it out.

*So going back to marriage, you said your marriage broke down.*

Yes. Nothing to do with my deafness. No, being deaf has made me more naive because I've not heard. If I had good hearing, I probably would have heard it a long time ago. My ex-husband -- I found out that he's basically lied about what he was earning and also that he lived a double life. He was a woman as well. He's not a woman physically but he calls himself Chloe and I know it sounds very, very bizarre, very odd but what happened was when we first got a computer he had lots of problems with it and then a little bit later on I was learning how to use it then I got some friends to show me how do stuff because I wasn't very -- I was good at graphic design but I wasn't very good at Internet stuff and all that. There was something wrong with the computer probably about six months later and said I tried to do this but couldn't. My friends came and they had a look, sort the computer out and they found stuff on there because one of them's very good at I don't know don't ask me the technical side of things basically there was loads of cookies I often say biscuits for a minute but cookies and they are on the cookies you see where people have been looking and from that he found my ex-husband's profile and things like that and loads of stuff and I couldn't believe it because you think you know someone all your life and then ... bam. I don't know them any more and it petrifies me. I relied on him so much but I'm torn because I went through paperwork because

I never touched bills, he did all the bills, he did everything. He sorted everything out. I didn't know what was what and where the money went and I always thought we didn't have enough money. So I had little part-time jobs in the evening like cleaning jobs when I had the children. After my section with Henry you weren't supposed to drive until after six weeks. I was driving down the garden centre it was still raw I had an infection I was I was cleaning to get money for school shoes and things like that and I feel very bitter that my husband strung me along thinking I'm thinking he hasn't got enough money to pay this that and the other yet he's spending it on himself, clothes, going to transformation getting himself transformed. He said he goes on holiday bike holidays mountain biking. Well, it turns out that he might not have been on these biking holidays, he might have been at these places spending lots of money because all this money's gone. He hasn't got anything to show for it. Also BT bills he kept them all in there and my friend looked in there and it goes right back to before I got married all these O-something numbers, sex chat, sex chat, this chat and like ten pounds for a phone call £6, you know, loads.

*So did he dress up in woman's clothes?*

Yes. I didn't see it. I didn't know.

*Is that a transsexual?*

No, he's a man, he just likes dressing up. In ladies clothes. Expensive ones. The thing is he lied to me all that time. I went out with him 1992 we didn't get married until 1997 plenty to have time to tell me. I wouldn't have minded -- people learn about people but some people have weird ways. I would have accepted it but I couldn't accept that he'd kept this behind and also the money. It's just like, you know, I felt it just -- it threw me. I couldn't look at him, I couldn't sleep with him, I felt sick.

*So it changed --*

My baby was two years old, Emily was about three or four something like that and Oliver was probably about 5 or 6. So I had three small children didn't know about bills and money, I've come straight from my Mum's house haven't got a clue about living on my own. It felt scary and I was very depressed, very depressed for a while tried to work it out with him tried to go

to relate sort it out, doctor's, had counselling at doctor's. It was a nightmare and then I got in touch with loads of old friends, started going on the computer looking for friends, deaf friends, just because I was on my own I was very upset, blah, blah, blah, I had a few Mums that I knew from the childrens' nursery school, only a couple and I used to talk and they would talk to me. They were very good, speak clearly, find very good friends, still very much in touch with them. They would give me advice what to do. In the end I bumped into Rivit who got me in touch with Andrew and I started talking to Andrew and we spoke for about three or four months on the Internet and he was saying try going to this go to see AB. I didn't have a clue about all these things. Get DLA. I didn't know what DLA was. What's DLA? What's DLA? I didn't know. Nobody tells you anything. So he's telling my all this. I start sorting my life out very slowly, I start looking for a solicitor. He told me you can get a solicitor belonging to resolution where they pay for the bills until you sell the house and they take the money out of that because I didn't have any money. So I found a solicitor then I started my divorce proceedings divorcing him because he was -- I just couldn't live with him any more. He was just ... I didn't know him. I thought I knew him, you know. After that, he told me to get in touch with the century team and they brought all the equipment round because I've never lived on my own before. They got me special doorbell, alarms, everything, everything connected with the –

*Where were you living at this time.*

He left.

*Where were you living.*

I was living in a small two bedroomed house --In Edgware. This was in South Mimms which is up the A1 from Edgware. I moved there when I got married. So I was a mess. Who do you go to I don't know who to ask. Don't want to be a burden to my Mum because I've been a burden all my life you know deaf child. I told my parents about it. They were devastated that I was divorcing because they saw Danny as my support and off my Mum and Dad's back, not to worry about me because I'm being looked after -- not looked after but you know what I mean. I'm not on my own. My Dad was devastated because my Dad got on with him because they were in the print, they talked shop, you know. My Dad was very old fashioned. He wanted me to stay with him because you know through sickness and health, blah, blah, blah,

blah. I was so unhappy. I was so depressed. So I then -- solicitor, I gave Danny a letter from the solicitor to say I'm divorcing. He was knocked away because he didn't think I was strong enough to do something so big because I've always been moulded into a housewife.

*Very brave decision.*

And I'm deaf you know what I mean so. I gave him the letter. He broke down because he could not believe what I just done I just done. That's it, I'm not giving you any more chance. I've given you chances to sort it out you keep doing this. You don't own up. You keep lying about it. He wouldn't be honest about it because when he did -- when I did tell him face-to-face with all the stuff I found and all the debts he had load of debts as well, he said that he can't help it he's been like that since he was seven but then he changed the story and said no, it's just a phase I'm just going through a phase. So he kept changing the story. It was like he was in a little vicious circle and I couldn't live with it any more. So I took about a year, then the divorce came through but I had to take him to court, do all sorts of things it was so hard.

*Was Andrew at that time -- because you said you had known Andrew at school.*

He was my little -- I felt like every day I'd turn on the computer I had someone to talk to about it and all he listened to me is moaning, moan, moan, moan, typing he did this, I got to do this and, blah, blah, blah,.

*So what year was this can you remember?*

That was 2005 -- I'm getting lost with time. 2005 was when I found out in March and I then the divorce about September that I gave him the letter from the solicitor. So from March to September I was an absolute mess, absolute mess. Didn't know what to do, don't know where to turn and that's when I found Andrew and I started seeing a lot of deaf friends, started getting social with deaf people because from the school to when I started my divorce I didn't see any deaf people.

*So where did you go to meet up with deaf people again?*

Somebody got back -- I don't know how that happened actually. I don't know how Jackie -- a lady called Jackie press from the Jewish deaf I can't remember how she got in touch with me. I think it was just a coincidence it was that time that she got in touch with me because she was looking for young deaf girls for her group and she had like a database probably because I used to belong to clubs when I was younger she probably got my name from there because I don't know how it happened, I don't know how they got the information but she got in touch with me do you want to come to this new club lip sync, you know, a good name. We went bowling, went for dinner and the different girls joining and then this girl rivit she was sitting opposite RAVIT Ravit I could never pronounce it when I was a kid rabbit, rabbit I just couldn't say it so I used to call her rabbit. She didn't mind. She had the teeth of a rabbit anyway. She was sitting opposite me and I recognise that face, I recognise that mole. Do I know you? She looked at me and I think I know you. What school did you go to. Seeders. Oh Ravit Amanda. We're chatting and she got married to a deaf guy that we knew and then I said who have you been in touch with. She said a load of names. Have you got their ... she give me their e-mail address or mobile number because I can text and I was really surprised that she bumped into Andrew and Hadley and Hadley she saw a long time ago because Hadley passed away. He had cancer but we had a big what was it ... get together in memory of Hadley and his sister did a big thing where they raised money and had a room in the hospital called Hadley's Den and she opened the ribbon and they raised the money for this room for sick children and it had a pool table, television, a play room for children. So we went to the opening, we all met up. It was lovely. So I got Andrew, he's helping me, supporting me because I didn't know about -- I was too wrapped up in myself I didn't find out what was going on with him.

*In Andrew's life no.*

I didn't find out anything that happened to him. Later on in the conversation maybe months later he started -- I said so what do you do for a living. I was so engrossed in myself I didn't ask him and he started telling me and he got -- he didn't tell me the full story about what happened to his hearing he told me a little bit. I don't think he was ready to tell me. Maybe because I had lots of problems he didn't want to put his problems on me. Maybe that was the reason why. So he -- I only got a titbit. He told me about his hospital experience where his sight went and everything. Oh no, you know. So one day I said it was spring shall we meet up in

London because I've got an appointment, I've got to go and get new ear moulds or something like that and we agreed to meet up in London at King's Cross Station at a time on 1st March or something like that and every year 1st March at this time he said remember we met this day at the station at 10.00 outside Smith's, you know. So he likes to -- it's like an anniversary remembering and he turned up with some flowers and I had to carry the flowers around for the whole of the day. Where do I put these then? It was funny. We just got on like a house on fire. We chatted and chatted and chatted. It was like I remember him from the playground and I felt so happy.

*Are you similar ages.*

Yes, he's six months older. We were in the same year and I felt at home. I felt so happy. It was good.

*So you said it seems to be it suits you better that you're with a deaf person now but so does Andrew feel that as well?*

Yes, because I don't think he's been out with deaf children -- deaf children, deaf people because he's mentioned a few girl friends he's been out with and he said I tend to go for the same type and they are all --you know what men are like, I go for blondes, I go for brunettes, I like big chests, the sporty type, a bit like the Spice Girls, I suppose, and all his girlfriends sound very similar and they didn't last very long. His relationships didn't -- he didn't make them last very long and my relationships with boys I had a couple of short ones but I had a couple of -- like one guy I went with for two years, another guy I went out for a year, that kind of thing. His relationships are shorter, I think, because I don't know, maybe -- I don't know why they didn't last. I don't know. I don't know. Maybe -- I don't know that answer. That's a very difficult one. But we just -- when we met up it was like we hadn't been away. It was like old times chat, chat, chat, loads of things in common, I could follow everything he said, I didn't struggle with the conversation. He was funny, I was funny. I'm mad. He's got that mad bit in him as well so we have so much -- we're throwing witty comments.

*You bounce off each other.*

One day something weird happened, so weird I've never had that before. He said he's got something like something he doesn't know what it is I think it's to do with the senses you are very heightened, heightened senses I don't know what it is but we were out with a group of friends, we'd been for a walk and we were very thirsty -- no, I didn't know he was thirsty.. We got on the train and I had water but he didn't know. I had water in my back pack. He didn't know what I've got in my back pack. I've got all sorts of things. How did it go? I can't remember how it went but we all sat down. Yes, that's it we all sat down you know you got the table in the train and two people there, two people there, a couple of friends there. We all sat down I sat there, he sat there and all of a sudden I felt something -- I didn't hear anything but in my head I was being asked to do something. I cannot remember what it was but I just did it automated. I automatically took my back pack off opened the zip, undid the bottle and went there you are, he said thank you and then he went like that he said did I ask you that? Yeah and the people opposite said no, you never asked her for the water. Yes, you did. I'm sure you asked me. But he didn't. I don't know what it was. It was something.

*Sort of telepathy.*

It was the weirdest thing and we just started laughing and crying. It was so weird. I've never done anything like that in my life. It was like we connected for a minute, for a second. It's like something said to me inside can I have some water, please, okay wait a minute. But I didn't do again of that it was inside. I don't know. I don't know what it was and we just days and days we were talking about it what was that, what was that? It's like when somebody talks and they finish your sentence. What was that? Not deja vu I don't know what it is. It's crazy. It was weird.

*So how -- you obviously introduced Andrew to your three children.*

Oh, yes.

*So have they taken to him very well?*

No.

*Oh..*

That's the part of the relationship that doesn't work. Because Andrew's profoundly deaf because he lost the rest, my children can't see that because Andrew's got almost -- well, it is perfect speech to me, very good speech from when he was younger, very good parents, very good education and just very clever and he speaks so he projects and it's beautiful. Because of that, you don't realise that he can't hear and children are very hard to follow if you're deaf. I know my children so I know their little bits and ways. I still struggle sometimes to understand but Andrew it's over his head. He hasn't got a clue and he's trying his best to get along with the kids because he feels he's competing with their Dad and he gets so frustrated and gets so angry and when he loses his temper ... the children they don't like it. They really don't and he makes me jump and he can't help it. It's frustration. So Emily's a bit more understanding. She's learning. She's learning quicker because she's a girl. Henry because he was two years old when I divorced my ex-husband he doesn't really remember much of me and Danny living together, my ex-husband. So he's happy to be with anybody so he's all right. But my son oh my God. He's ten years old, he remembers Daddy and Mummy living together and he sees Andrew this man that shouts a lot and he sees him as a threat. You are trying to take over. You know, you've got a problem. You got attitude problem, you know, but he's not it's because he's deaf you know. Oliver can't see that because he's a child himself and Andrew hasn't got the patience to sit down with Oliver. Oliver hasn't got the patience Andrew's like a big ten year old as well sometimes. It's two ten-year olds fighting. Oliver gets very upset if I get cuddly with Andrew if I sit next to him holding his hand watching television or anything like that.

*Jealous?*

He comes up like a stroppy teenager and he's only ten and he causes me so much misery. So what I tend to do I know it's wrong avoiding contact between -- Andrew does see the kids at least once a week but I don't prolong their -- I don't put them together too long. If he stays more than one day there will be trouble. It's just one day Andrew can come up with lots of antics and funny things to do but then it wears thin. He can't keep it going. It's tiring when you are trying to keep up and after that Andrew starts to ... flag a bit and then he starts losing his temper and Oliver hasn't got the lip he just does everything to wind Andrew up.

*So it's like two lives really to try and have a relationship and --*

I have to try to arrange that my ex-husband sees the children on a Saturday, I spend that day with Andrew. But it's difficult because he lives in Eastbourne and I live in Potter's bar and we used to have so much fun together.

*Do you go to any deaf clubs together?*

No. I did that when I was a younger, a teenager but maybe early twenties a little bit but I don't go to any clubs.

*Have you been on the LINK course?*

I haven't, no. I know about it. I've done things at the Imperial College where I've helped out in the cloakroom, cloakroom assistant helped out a little bit of voluntary work on their exhibitions, you know, but no, I haven't.

*So have you found it difficult with financially, you know, have you known which benefits and that to --*

When I started divorcing and everything, I was talking to Andrew and he's telling me you can get this, you can get that, that's when I thought oh I didn't know that, I didn't know you get this or that. So he helped me do the forms. I didn't have a clue. I can't fill forms in. They scare me. I get pages and pages ... what? They are totally lost on my. So he went through with me because sometimes I look at questions what's it asking me? I've had the question, I understand the question I go to put the answer but then I question the question. Is that a trick question? Then I think further into the question, do they mean ... I think I just think too much and I worry too much maybe it means something else. I think it's the same when you are listening to a hearing person did they mean ... because I don't get everything you're saying I get bits and I put it together and it's like a puzzle and putting it together and I see texts like that sometimes. Now does he mean like that or does he mean like... you know I question everything thoroughly to make sure I've got that right. So then I get myself all mixed up and confused, then I can't fill the thing in because I've got all upset. So he helped me fill in the forms, then it got sent back -- not denied, turned down and Andrew said they do that with everybody. They are trying to put you off. Don't give up. So I appealed. I had no-one to go

with. I asked him to go with me so he went with me and I was in there two seconds. Why are you here? Why haven't you got this? Why haven't they given you the thumbs up you wasted your journey here you should have got it. Because they looked through the orms. They obviously ... I don't know you know. I think they do try to put you off getting it. So I got that, got my DLA, got that every month but because I've got three children I'm on my own I get quite a good DLA, I think, or something like that. I think it's good. It's helped a lot. And also didn't know about working tax credits and things like that so I had to fill those forms in. One form after another. Not only that I had to sort out all the bills because it was before Christmas that he left the house when I said the solicitor you got to leave he stopped paying the bills. I had no money, no job and he's just nasty. He wanted me to beg him to come back so that he can pay the bills but I knew it was a trick. I persevered and got all these red letters and what's this, I didn't know you pay for that, oh you have to pay for that, water, council, gas, electric, house insurance, everything. Oh my ... that scared the hell out of me. So Andrew came up to me one weekend and we went to somewhere like WHS bought loads of folders, went online, did a load of stuff online and we sorted folders out gas, electric, water, blah, blah, blah, blah and we found and we got it all set up direct debits.

*So Andrew has been very good in that sense as well.*

Organising asking he's got and because he's he asks lived on his own he knows about bills. Didn't have a clue. So he's my saviour, he's my crutch. I said I'm his crutch but I can't be he's very dependent. So without Andrew, I think I would have been stuck with that ex-husband somehow. I would have gone crawling back to him saying I can't pay for this, I can't do it, I don't know how to do this, I don't know where to go. But Andrew had all this information I think because he was at LINK and he knew the resources, they were there and you know. I didn't know where to go.

*So going back to your hearing aids now, they are much more obviously -- you're hearing aids, much more better than the earlier designed things that you had.*

They are digital now.

*Do you think the National Health Service has changed a lot?*

It's crap. Sorry, excuse my French.

*That's interesting.*

At the Nuffield they looked after me when I was a child. I had the most perfect ear moulds every time I went. I never had problems with ear moulds the fittings were brilliant. They were thorough, they were good, the hearing tests everything was thorough proper staff, proper appointments everything was thorough and my Mum didn't have any problems. Then when I went -- I grew up and I went to the adult part of the hospital I was fine for a couple of years and then the hospital started lacking its the service just -- the service, the whole thing was going down hill, the place was getting a bit tatty and I mean, they've done it up since but the service itself like the ear moulds, the quality, everything, everything was poor and the staff -- some of the staff were from they've got the staff from abroad and didn't have a clue. Why did they get staff that you can't follow? You know and I had to keep going back for new ear moulds. I wouldn't go to any other place because I didn't feel comfortable I felt comfortable with the place that I used to go to and I had been going for years but then when they started the ear moulds were being terrible fits, whistling and too big or too small or one bit rubbing. Oh my ... so I started -- my Mum got another book, a hearing aid book, so I made an appointment here and an appointment there, got ear moulds down there and they not the same day but and then see which ones fit and mix and match you know what I mean to get them to fit. Often I go and I say can you make me two, please two sets because I guarantee one of those won't fit. So lately they've been a lot better say in the last year or two. Before that oh my God.

*But you feel in general that the service has deteriorated since you were small?*

It has. It's terrible, absolutely awful and also Andrew's got new hearing aids recently. He said you are supposed to get new ones every few years. I didn't know that because this one ear I'm having trouble with the door. My old ones had switches on and off. Now the stupid designers decide to put it in the door so that to turn it on and off you have to shut the battery door and open it, you know, that kind of thing wear and tear when you open and shut it the mechanism's going to go at some point. This one's started already so that I've got to open and shut the door 20 times before it comes on. And also I lose the hearing aid batteries at night. I've taken my hearing aids out, you have to open the door to turn them off, you've opened the

door, the batteries fall out. It's stupid. When you're older, can you imagine old people they can't get hold of the little batteries. Absolutely mad.

*At night when you take your hearing aids out are you completely deaf?*

I can't hear at night, no. The only thing I can hear if somebody comes up really close if my Dad used to whistle like a wolf whistle with his fingers I might be able to hear that like a whistle. I can feel and I can feel the air change. So if the children walk in the room when you go like that move your hand and your feel somebody coming, I'm on that side of the room and the door opens I can feel -- I immediately I don't know mother's instinct you wake up and you stare straight at them. It's frightening because oh you made me jump because I can't hear them come in but I can feel them. But I've got two vibrators -- two vibrating pads under the pillows, one for the fire alarm and one's connected to my pager and that's door, telephone, children crying screaming that kind of thing and fire alarm. So I wear the pager in the day.. I don't wear it when the children are there. If I'm on my own the children are at their Dads I wear it.. If the children are there, I rely on them to tell me.

*So there's no particular deaf groups or anybody that has helped you apart from Andrew really.*

No, no-one.

*So you don't feel like you've had a lot of support.*

My Mum and Dad have been my support but they don't know where to look. They did their best while at school and college they got me the support teachers but they are getting old now, you know. They've got their problems.

*Has religion or church played any part?*

No, but my ex-husband when I gave him divorce papers he turned to religion. He became a Jehovah's Witness and he still does the other thing. He goes to -- I found out I shouldn't have found out but I did I accidentally signed in to his e-mail. He hasn't changed any of his e-mail stuff because we used to share e-mails stuff like that. I didn't twig it, did I. I put it in and then

on there he pays people and he goes round and he goes to be a slave and things like that. How can you -- I don't know how you can be two people, go into that religion where you are supposed to not do this, not do that and do this. Two sides to the coin it's like he's not schizophrenic but.

*Personality.*

I don't know how you can live with that. His Mum thinks he's not doing it any more. Thinks it's just a phase because they live together now Mum and son and she's a Jehovah, she was not brain washed him but said come along to my meetings so he's gone along when he was very low because I divorced him and he decided mmm, I know that annoys Amanda. I'm sure it is because I said to him once when a Jehovah knocked on the door I'm not being prejudiced and they stand, there. Talking, talking, talking, I haven't got a clue what they are saying, going on and on, sorry, no thank you or why don't you join -- one time I said why don't you go on an art course, do painting because old lady you'd enjoy that. It's raining, you don't want to be standing in the rain and talk over there and they stop talking then.. Haven't got a clue what they are saying. They want me to take their brochure. No, no save the printing, save your money or something like that. I don't have a clue. Wasting their breath. So he's gone into that. So I'm not religious. I don't know it's probably because a lot of my lessons at school I didn't go to because I had extra lessons in the hearing unit so I didn't do religious education, I didn't do home economics. Basically it was the main subjects like English and mathematics and art. I couldn't miss art because it was the creative side. I think I did history and geography as well but it was a very much English speech everything. That was more concentrated. They wanted you to get that right because it's hard. The other subjects aren't as important as English you know getting by. So I didn't really get involved with religion. I know there's religion out there. I'm not against anybody having religion it's up to them. I can understand when you're saying I work in a hospice now I work in a halfway house hospice it's where people go when they've had a stroke or they've had an operation or they are dying and it's like a little hospital, I work there in an activities co-ordinator and I provide activities to get them through the day not the day the morning because I only work part-time and I get them to do painting and all sorts of arts and crafts, play games, I get them out their rooms otherwise they are just sitting there.

*So the creativity --*

I love it, I love it and also that fact that I'm helping them because a lot of them go home after six to eight weeks. There's one part of the hospital where it's like a hospice they have cancer and stuff like that and they are very ill, but the other part is they've got physio staff, doctors and things and work in the activities room and they put a call out at 10.30 every morning activity today bingo. On Friday I do bingo. I call out numbers, go round check if they've put the numbers on their things. So I'm providing something to make their day a bit better, break their day up while they are.

*Rehabilitating?*

Yes. So they all love it. They love it coming down hello Amanda. But I find it very difficult when they've had a stroke I don't know what they are saying.

*Is that difficult.*

Very difficult because I don't really know what they are saying. I'm guessing. Is that tea or coffee. Tea and they go like this or did you say tea. No, coffee do you know what I mean. They know that – I tell them that I can't hear very well and a lot of them say nor can we.

*So how have you found it now with using telephones and general communication equipment obviously the computer.*

Come a long way with computers.

*You said the the television and subtitles.*

I was very much on my own in my bedroom when I was a kid. I would have loved it if I had a computer and could have talked to friends. That would have been brilliant but of course it didn't come out then. But deaf children of today they've got -- they have got the making of it, they've got it all. It's brilliant. The stuff they've got now is -- it blows me away. That TV in their room with everything in it and Andrew was telling me that's this, that this ... all in one monitor. I said you are joking I've never seen anything like that before and what's this little

thing the control box.. It looks like a match box. It blows me away all this technology it's brilliant.

*Can you use the telephone?*

I do. It's old -- it's not old, it's an old model I need to get a new one. It's one with the big keys. I'm not short sighted but it's the only one I could get with an amplifier that you can change the tone and I only talk to my Mum. I don't answer the phone. I use it to phone up my Mum.. The children use it to talk to their Dad or if the phone rings tell them not to touch it because my Mum texts me or -- my Mum's not very good at texting but my Dad's better. What my Mum does if you wants to tell me a message you gets a marker writes it on a piece of paper takes a photo and sends the photo. No, its not AB, the ABCDEF you know, the letters are all on one key you press it, I tried to tell her that predictive text but that confused her totally. So I thought I'll do the bit when you press it once for A twice for B3 times for C. She still doesn't get it. So she just given up on that because of her age she's seething older now so emergency she writes on a bit of paper, the kids are fine takes a photo sends the photo I get a buzz, I look and I laugh my head of because my Mum's way of communicating with me is hilarious. I show my friends. Look the kids are okay, a picture of a piece of paper with big writing on it. Brilliant. My Mum's funny.

*Have you sort of been able to travel and that in your life?*

I'm not a very good traveller. I'm not very good at travelling.

*Is that because of your hearing?*

I think it might have something to do with it because when I talk to other deaf people they sometimes have similar stories. I don't like being in crowded places, don't know what's going on, I don't like being in crowded places, unfamiliar places. I don't like it. I have to be with someone I know like Andrew. I don't like going on the train on my own but I did it. I did it on the way up. I absolutely hate it, I absolutely hate being on my own travelling. I'm frightened I'm going the wrong way. I've had that fear since I was a little girl when I was going to school I used to dream that the school -- the taxi would take me to another school or take me to another town and leave me there and I wouldn't know how to get home. Stuff like

that because I did get lost as a child. My Mum was talking to the neighbour and I was only a toddler and took myself up off the road and then up to the shops which my Mum said it's about half a mile with a little pushchair thing with a dolly in it and luckily my Mum's other neighbour was driving home, saw me, picked me up, brought me back. From then onwards I had a dog tag here, dog tag there, my Mum's watching me all the time.

*So your family have been a good support obviously.*

Very good family but the thing is Andrew doesn't --Andrew's parents didn't get on with my parents. They had different values about how you bring your child up because they are deaf. That's what parents do. I remember going to mother and toddler groups, I was feeding mine by the age of so and so and so my Mum was cutting teeth when he was twelve months old, he didn't have his teeth until he's 19 blah blah and there's always that tittle-tattle. So my Mum or his Mum, you know, upset each other somewhere along the line. So when I did get back in touch with Andrew, that came up. Well, my Mum didn't like the way that your Mum was leaving you to get on with it and you know. You know, I think my Mum and Dad brought me up the best they could and I think Andrew's parents brought him the best that they could. Different situation, different kid and also he was a first child, I was a second. So with a second child you're more relaxed. With Andrew they were like oh, we got to get this right, you know, it's got to be right and Andrew is a bit like that. You've got to have it just right, organised, and I'm the opposite. I'm like oh whatever.

*Do you feel because of your deafness in any way that you have been discriminated against over the years?*

I have, yes. All the time. Jobs, my course when I went on my course, school, everything. Everything. They give you that rubbish about we've got the disability discrimination act and we've got the two ticks. It's a load of cobblers. A load of cobblers. t's just ball, blah, blah, blah, beep, beep, beep ...It is. They make out they will employ you ... rubbish. The amount of jobs I've been to amount of jobs Andrew's been to the amount of jobs my friends they are all deaf, all had problems getting jobs and they are all intelligent people, all got skills but a company will make profit they think from a hearing person than a deaf person. They'll go for the hearing person in the interviews. I'm not sure about the deaf one, might just lag a bit I'll

take the hearing one. Rubbish, rubbish. They don't say it. They give it all that oh, yes yes brilliant, you know.

*We'll let you know.*

Give it all that ... but the thing is because I've been deaf all my life I've put up with it but people that lost their hearing it's much harder. Not only have you got to learn a new way of life, you've got all this discrimination to deal with as well. I put up with bullying at school and everything.

*So do you feel like -- how do you feel today what, you know, have you got any plans you'd like to do for the future?*

I can't think that far ahead. I like to live for I've had a lot of depression in my life. I had a break down last year for the first time in my life and that was the build-up from my divorce, moving house, bills, coping being on my own, everything. I've been putting on a brave face for about four years/three years and it all got on top of me last year. I'm still raw. I'm on antidepressants, coming off them slowly but it's been a long ride. So I can't think far ahead. I can't think in the future. I can't think about relationships and things like that. I have a relationship with Andrew but it's not normal because I can't make myself invite him to live with me.

*The commitment?*

I can't commit and he is very devoted to LINK and his council. So we're okay with that that we're in two different places and meet up in the middle for the time being. I don't know what it's going to be like in the future. I'd like to live together with him because we get on so well. He has his funny side, so do I and we do have our moments, we all do, but he's the best match that I can find because ... we just get on and I wind him up chronic and he's like a private schoolboy to me and I'm like oh you know mess his hair up and he likes his knives and forks like that and I don't care. So we're opposite but it kind of keeps it exciting.

*A good combination really.*

Yes. I like to swear, he doesn't. I have to be careful. I have to say oh fiddle sticks, oh sugar. You are here Andrew I've got to remember not to swear because it's common, you know.

*Is there anything else that you would like to add to the interview?*

No.

*I should think Andrew's a wonderful guy yes.*

He's wonderful, very giving. I mean, I'm giving in my job. I think some -- I think if you look at most deaf people or people with disabilities they are very giving. They want to give something back to help others like them sort of thing. So yeah. I'm very pleased to be part of this thank you very much.

*Thank you very much. That was very interesting.*

Time for a cup of tea!

[End of recording]