

BSL Zone Live stream: Education - The New Normal

English translation by Helen Foulkes

Presented by Fifi Garfield, with Martine Monksfield, peripatetic teacher of the deaf, Daniel Jillings, a Deaf campaigner studying for GCSEs, and his mother, Ann Jillings.
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Fifi: Hello everyone! Hope you are watching our BSL Zone Live Stream! I would like to welcome Daniel and his mother Ann. We also have Martine Monksfield, who has been in a previous live stream. My name is Fifi Garfield, hello and welcome! Thank you for joining our conversation to talk about education. I hope everyone has been keeping well - if you are watching, please do click the "love" or "care" emoji as we will appreciate some love and care!

I have some prepared questions here which we will cover for the first half hour, then in the last half hour, we will open up to questions from the audience who can submit written questions about concerns around education. I hope you all enjoy this session.

I have a question for Martine - there have been so many changes to Government guidance with regard to schools, rules have been continuously changing, has this made your job difficult? Have you been working from home or still doing home visits?

Martine: As a peripatetic teacher of the deaf, I would normally do family visits and visits to mainstream schools where there is a deaf child or deaf children present. Prior to lockdown, my council advised me to prepare for working from home. Once we went into lockdown, we had to think how we could continue our work with home and school visits, so this was changed from actual physical visits to doing it remotely through a range of mediums such as text messages, emails, Skype, WhatsApp and using new technology such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Before lockdown, I had never heard of Zoom and we are now using this on a daily basis.

Remote working is really difficult for a lot of deaf children, teenagers, adults and other deaf Teachers of the Deaf. For instance, having to ensure remote interpreters are booked, webinars inaccessible without interpreters or subtitles, sound not being good enough. It has been very difficult to make home working effective. In addition to that, a lot of us have children present at home, so it has been chaotic.

Fifi: So the changes in the Government guidance have been difficult. I have noticed that some schools have re-opened but only for specific age groups; can you explain why this has happened?

Martine: The Government recently announced that for primary schools, pupils in reception, Year 1, and Year 6 could go back to school. This is because those three years are what is called "transition" years, so for reception children they transit from Early Years to Key Stage 1, Year 1 transit from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, and Year 6 transit from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. My job is focused on primary school ages, so I am guessing that Year 10 in secondary schools are also back at school due to another transition? My husband is a secondary school teacher, so he keeps me updated on secondary school while I update him on primary school details! So those years who return to schools are related to "transition" between Key Stages - other years are not due back at school yet.

Fifi: So teachers are preparing children in those specific year groups for transition to the next stage?

Martine: That's right. Do bear in mind that not all children in those specific year groups, reception, Year 1, Year 6 and Year 10, are back at school. It is dependent on individual schools, whether they have the space available to maintain

social distancing rules. I am aware that the rules have stated 2 metres of social distancing, and from next week the rules are changing to one metre. At my son's school, space is a problem so they have decided to take one form per year - I am aware other schools are taking two or three forms per year - so it depends on individual schools. Due to limited space, my son's school has only been open to children of essential key workers. It is a real challenge for individual schools to ensure that they follow Government guidance rules, it is really exhausting!

Fifi: Yes, schools initially taped floors to indicate 2 metres distances and the rules quickly changed to 1 metre which means they have had to rip up the taping and re-tape at 1 metre distances which has created additional work for schools! The Government talks about "bubbles"; can you explain what this involves as I am not clear what this refers to and I am sure the audience would want to know what this is?

Martine: In schools, a social bubble consists of a fixed group of six pupils, or a maximum of 15 people with a teacher and teaching assistant. Each bubble must stay separate to one another to reduce the risk of infection, individuals must not interact with others from different bubbles. This concept is difficult to explain to some deaf children - there is a fantastic resource on YouTube which will be made available after this session. A Teacher of the Deaf created this visual resource to explain how social bubbles work to prepare children going back to school. Deaf children, and hearing children, may feel uncomfortable with this concept so this resource will help them.

Fifi: We can have a look at this resource link afterwards, thank you for explaining what a bubble is. How will this work if a child attends school part time, can they share their place in a bubble with another child in the days that they aren't attending?

Martine: This is a difficult question, I have been asking various people before this session about how this will work. It depends on various factors, the individual school, the individual child and their needs. To give an example, let's think of bubble A which consists of Mohammed attending school on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. In bubble B, there is Sarah who attends school on Thursdays and Fridays. Mohammed cannot join bubble B, Sarah cannot join bubble A, if they are to be in the same bubble, they will have to attend school on the same day so Sarah would have to attend school on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays if she is to be in the same bubble as Mohammed and vice versa for Mohammed if he is to be part of Sarah's bubble, he would have to attend school on Thursdays and Fridays. Bubbles cannot be mixed, they have to be kept separated. Whoever is in a particular bubble, they have to remain in the same bubble for the duration.

Fifi: Ok, thanks for the clarification. What is the difference in education provision for children at home and at school, are they learning the same things? Will children at home fall behind those children who are at school?

Martine: Children at home will be learning exactly the same as children who are at school. Before lockdown happened, some children were already ahead of others so during lockdown we expect the same, some children are ahead and some children are behind. Some children at home will be learning different things that they wouldn't learn at school such as life skills. My six year old son has finally learned to ride a bike! We don't have a lot of free time so this lockdown has meant that we can teach life skills. Learning is not only about academic work, they can learn emotional literacy, social skills. Your whole life is learning. If there are any parents who are concerned about their child falling behind, please contact the school for support because that is what they are there for.

Fifi: Thank you. Now I would like to ask Daniel, you are studying for your GCSEs aren't you?

Daniel: Yes, that is right.

Fifi: So, what is a typical school day for you at the moment at home? You are not going to school?

Daniel: No, I am not yet at school.

Fifi: So, what is your daily plan for schooling?

Daniel: On waking up, I look at my SMHW (Show My Homework) app to see the three tasks that my teachers have uploaded for the day for each of my GCSE topics. I spend one hour on each topic. It is simple and quick to use, although it is English-based. My school has encouraged us to read more, so my Mum and I always read the same book so that we can discuss what is happening. I also watch films that are linked to books that I am expected to read for school as part of a reading list which helps to stop boredom.

Fifi: It sounds like you are keeping busy!

Martine: Can I go to Daniel's school please?!

Ann: The school teachers are strict there!

Fifi: Let me look at the questions... you have been given work that is English-based, have you been OK with that? Any problems?

Daniel: No, no problems.

Fifi: Do you have any sign language support if there is anything you don't understand?

Daniel: Yes, I do have a Teacher of the Deaf support or interpreter when we have remote meetings through Microsoft Teams.

Fifi: That is perfect! I have a question for Ann! There have been a lot of online videos, how accessible do you think they have been?

Ann: There have been a lot of learning activities on Facebook aimed at children but there is no signing. Deaf organisations such as RAD have set up activities using sign language, however they are aimed at younger children. So it has been difficult to find things that are accessible through BSL. There are some accessible online learning, such as Oak Academy. NDCS has been working with the BBC to improve their subtitles. Daniel can read subtitles so he is fine, but we would prefer more accessible resources available in BSL.

Fifi: Yes we need to think how to meet the broad range of communication methods used by a range of individual children. Martine, did you want to say something?

Martine: Yes, the live captions on Zoom, Microsoft Teams and YouTube are not accurate, which is frustrating. We have been trying to encourage people who are using videos to use pre-recorded subtitles. It is so frustrating to see the auto-generated subtitles used because this is not accurate at all.

Ann: Yes schools use a lot of YouTube clips and use the auto-generated subtitles which they think is good but it does look odd.

Daniel: It is hard for me because I want to be able to read the subtitles to help me with my school work and if I can't understand what is being said...

Ann: As Daniel mentioned earlier, we like to watch films to match with books that we are reading and not all films are subtitled. Sometimes it is easier to purchase actual DVDs to get the subtitles.

Martine: I think the Government has forgotten that deaf children need extra time to get the access that is required to enable them to do schoolwork, as Daniel mentioned time spent looking for accessible material - it is double the effort, double the work for Daniel so he has to work harder! Is that fair?

Fifi: No it is not fair. We want to be equal to everyone else and be treated the same. Ann, what kind of provision have you seen made available for parents of Deaf children, and the children themselves?

Ann: We are lucky in that our school has a full time Teacher of the Deaf who is Deaf, and there is also a Deaf Role Model.

Fifi: Do you attend a mainstream school or a deaf school?

Ann: Daniel attends a mainstream school with full time support from the Teacher of the Deaf, with full time 1:1 interpreting support. There is a Microsoft Teams meeting every Monday morning in which the ToD or interpreter clarify signs for jargon and have a social chat. On Friday mornings the Deaf ToD has a quiz with us, so it is fun!

Martine: That is brilliant!

Ann: Every two weeks we also have a remote meeting with the Deaf Role Model to practise signing.

Daniel: That really helps a lot to stop me from feeling isolated at home and to prepare me for going back to school having that continuous support through BSL. When I go back to school, it will be easier for me.

Ann: The school is also happy for email correspondence to happen through the week if there are any problems.

Daniel: We are lucky to have this technology really, with email, Zoom, Microsoft Teams. In the old days, there was no technology!

Fifi: In my time, and Martine's time, we could not have coped with studying with the current situation without the technology that is available now.

Martine: Fifi, how many times did your Teacher of the Deaf visit you at school? You went to a mainstream school didn't you?

Fifi: I attended a PHU during my primary school years then I attended a deaf school, so I didn't attend a mainstream school.

Martine: Ah right, I attended mainstream school and my Teacher of the Deaf only visited me for one hour once a week. Looking back, I had it hard, I should have been in a unit, but a decision was made back then with the information my parents had. It is brilliant what Daniel has now with a Deaf Teacher of the Deaf which matches his individual needs. We should be advocating this to show how it works!

Fifi: Yes we should be looking to Daniel as an example and learn from it.

Ann: Yes we are lucky.

Fifi: Yes, very lucky.

Martine: But it shouldn't be down to luck. All deaf children should be getting what Daniel is getting as a minimum expectation.

Fifi: A question for Martine - what do you recommend hearing parents of deaf children do in terms of getting good resources to help them communicate with their deaf child?

Martine: That is an interesting question, because before lockdown, it had been difficult to get BSL resources for families - Daniel and Ann's situation is unique as there aren't many BSL teachers. Since lockdown, we have seen a massive increase in remote working and a lot of new online BSL resources have been launched. I am loving the stories produced by Frank Barnes, RAD, BDA which weren't in place before. Maybe in the future after lockdown, we need to think about offering BSL remotely to hearing families, now that we know this set up can work? In the past, we would say it is important to have face-to-face contact, which is right, but can this be done remotely?

Fifi: Yes I agree. There has been a lot of discussion about child poverty lately. Do you know what is happening with provision for children who normally have free school meals through the summer holidays?

Martine: When lockdown started, families who had free school meals prior to the lockdown were issued vouchers; this was carried on through the May half term holidays and this voucher system was planned to stop at the end of summer term. The fantastic famous football player, Marcus Rashford, came to the rescue, campaigned for this voucher system to be carried on through the summer holidays. This was agreed, isn't this fantastic? We shouldn't have needed him to campaign for this, the Government should know about this need and it shouldn't have taken the coronavirus situation for this change to happen. Thank you to Marcus Rashford for using his platform, his privileged position, to campaign successfully for this to happen to help families in poverty. Did you know Marcus Rashford was involved with Deaf children in Manchester with a poetry competition and he learned a few signs in BSL? I am already in love with him! Marcus, if you are watching this, do call me!

Fifi: What about your husband?!

Martine: I'd leave him (laughing)

Fifi: That was nice of him. Daniel, you have been campaigning for a GCSE in BSL. How do you think the lockdown situation will affect that?

Daniel: Good question. Last November, Christmas, Nick Gibbs announced that consultations were taking place over a new drafted curriculum for a GCSE in BSL which takes two years to put in place. However, all Government departments refocused their work to the coronavirus pandemic which means that the GCSE in BSL plans have been ignored...

Fifi: So you will have to continue your campaign? Make noise?!

Daniel: ... I plan to write a letter to send to Nick Gibbs and remind him not to forget the GCSE in BSL. It looks like this may be delayed for another year, or another two years, who knows? I think there will be a massive delay.

Fifi: Is there anything we can do to speed up this process? Should we write our own letters to our MPs?

Daniel: You can write to your own MP, the topic is open for discussion. Mention it on Twitter or Facebook and nag them. Anyone can do this, you are welcome to join and support me.

Fifi: Yes we could try that.

Martine: I think Daniel has done amazing with his campaign on getting a GCSE in BSL considered. You started this campaign when you were 13?

Daniel/Ann: 12 years old.

Martine: When I was 12, I was too busy watching TV to do something like that! The rest of us Deaf people, as an Army, are behind you! Whatever you want us to do next, we will all back you up all the way and support you. I think it is an amazing achievement for a 12 year old to do this. I remember when it was announced that a GCSE in BSL would be considered, I visited some secondary schools and without any prompting from me, the schools said to me that they would definitely be interested in getting a GCSE in BSL on their curriculum - this is how much your campaign has generated interest out there!

Fifi: Martine, when you were 12 you were watching TV, when I was 12 I was teaching myself how to roller skate. Daniel as a 12 year old is definitely in a different league, already thinking about the future for yourself and others in your generation. I think you are amazing. I am embarrassed to think what little I achieved when I was 12 years old!

Martine: I think roller blading is a good skill to have as a life skill!

Fifi: Not roller blading, roller skating.

Martine: Ah, roller skating - it is still a great life skill to have compared to me watching TV! (laughing)

Fifi: Audience, you are more than welcome to type any questions you may have for Martine, Daniel or Ann, starting now. Daniel, I will start with my own question for you, I need to think of a question... Daniel, do you think you will be going back to school this year, or will it be next year?

Daniel: It is very difficult to say, it all depends on when the coronavirus ends. Will schools go back to normal? Will it be safe for us?

Fifi: I have another question, your campaign for a GCSE in BSL, what do you want within the curriculum for GCSE in BSL?

Daniel: I would like to see a range of topics including sign linguistics, sign vocabulary, Deaf history, Deaf identity and Deaf culture.

Fifi: So this GCSE can be for anyone, deaf or hearing?

Daniel: Yes for anyone. Deaf individuals who are already using BSL can do this at GCSE-level to get a qualification. Hearing people who are interested to learn sign can also do this GCSE.

Ann: Hearing people can use this qualification to become an interpreter in the future. There are not enough interpreters and CSWs. Hearing children can do this qualification and consider the possibility of becoming interpreters as a career.

Fifi: so...

Daniel: It will be useful...

Fifi: Sorry, you go ahead Daniel...

Daniel: Having a GCSE in BSL would look more impressive on your CV; interviewers will recognise GCSE more than BSL Level 1, BSL Level 2 and so on, as a lot of them won't know the existing BSL qualifications.

Fifi: I think that would be brilliant. Martine?

Martine: I think deafness is the least understood disability in Britain, there are a lot of myths. A GCSE in BSL will enable much more awareness and clarify information and facts. If those hearing students become doctors, they would understand the importance of having interpreters. Attitudes will change for the better. Deaf children in mainstream school settings will have the opportunity to learn about their own deaf identity just like other deaf children in deaf schools or PHUs. It will be amazing to get a GCSE in BSL, I am really looking forward to seeing this happen in secondary schools.

Fifi: I would like to ask Martine another question linked to a previous question about bubbles in schools - does this rule apply only in England, or does the same rule apply to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland too?

Martine: A good question. The bubbles are for England. For Scotland, I think children are going back to school in mid-August with no social distancing rules. I understand that in Northern Ireland, children are going back to school mid-August, but I am not sure of their social distancing rules. In Wales, they have similar rules to England. I am aware that Wales and Scotland are talking about blended learning - a mixture of learning at home and learning at school. But please don't take my word for it, you would need to double check facts. There is a useful website on Instagram called "Simple Politics" which is great for simple and clear information.

Fifi: I have a question from the audience, from Caroline - can deaf children have additional time for tests or exams compared to hearing children?

Martine: Before lockdown, deaf children with an EHCP - Education, Health and Care Plan - were guaranteed to 25% additional time for tests and exams. If your child does not have an EHCP, you need to discuss with the school regarding normal working practice and say to them that your child already has longer time to do their work so they need the same for tests and exams. An application needs to be made to the exam board/s, and usually the Teacher of the Deaf supports the application. With the coronavirus pandemic, all tests and exams have been dropped, so there are no exams this year therefore no need for additional time. Schools have to think what levels pupils are currently at, and consider any background factors that need to be taken in account. A main concern for deaf children is how much they will need to catch up closer to exams - this is what the Teacher of the Deaf can help with. I hope this answers your question, Caroline?

Fifi: Thank you. Another audience question from Bronwynne, I think this question is for Daniel. Does your school provide BSL videos for your subjects?

Daniel: Yes, for example for my drama subject, my teacher creates videos and tends to speak rather than provide written text. My interpreter films themselves when they are interpreting from spoken English to BSL onto an app called Screenomatic which is then shown at the same time as the video. This is really useful and helpful to enable me to follow what is going on. Other resources are in written English format which I can read myself, so BSL is not needed. All schools are different in their own way.

Fifi: Did your school approach you to ask what you need, or did you approach your school to tell them what you need?

Daniel: My school gives me videos with subtitles which are usually good enough - I haven't needed to ask them as everything is available.

Fifi: That is good, it certainly sounds a really, really lovely school! Another audience question, from Sarah Jane for Martine. Is BSL linguistics provided on the curriculum in deaf schools?

Martine: At the moment, I don't work in deaf schools or units, but I think BSL linguistics would be expected to be offered as part of Deaf Studies in deaf schools and units. I think this is a fantastic opportunity for children to have Deaf Studies as a way for deaf children to develop their Deaf identity. It is a shame that deaf children in mainstream schools are not offered this. I am lucky that my own council offers deaf children in mainstream schools the opportunity to visit their nearest units once every week to take part in the Deaf Studies classes. I am aware that one of my students goes to a unit every two weeks; they love meeting other deaf children and taking part in Deaf Studies lessons, so they get the best of both worlds.

Fifi: That is great. Another audience question for Daniel from Murphy - has it been easier for you to learn at home or is it easier to learn at school?

Daniel: Both options have pros and cons. In a school environment, there is a working environment in classrooms with other children, working in groups with teaching support. Working from home on my own without friends can be hard, but I can have more breaks at home to eat biscuits! At home, I have more time and it is more relaxing compared to school where it is stricter, where you have to follow rules.

Ann: We are cooking every day at home!

Daniel: Yes I am cooking every day.

Fifi: Daniel, are you cooking every day?

Daniel: Yes I have made cakes, today I made chocolate muffins!

Fifi: Post some to me!

Daniel: I will try!

Fifi: Martine - same question to you - is it easier to do face-to-face visits or to work remotely from home?

Martine: It really depends on the situation. I watch my husband, who is a secondary school teacher trying to teach and support mainstream teachers and he finds it challenging. For instance in the classroom, if a pupil puts their hand up to ask a question, the teacher can have a quick chat and then gets on with the lesson. However in a remote meeting, it can be more difficult for a pupil to ask the teacher a quick question because all microphones will have to be muted which adds time to the teaching session - a one hour remote session easily becomes two hours!

Teachers want to ensure that they have a successful lesson and ensure that all their individual pupils have understood the session, teachers don't like giving a prescriptive one hour lecture as that would be a waste of time. Remote teaching can be harder, I am sure as time goes on, remote teaching will become slightly easier, knowing how to use the technology. At the start of the lockdown, we were all in the same boat, we all had to learn how to utilise the technology quickly. Deaf people also had the added barriers of working out the best way for access in terms of subtitles and using remote interpreters. I know a lot of teachers will be happier going back to school - however I know that teachers will have to be well prepared for children returning to school AND prepare online teaching, which is double the effort of normal preparation. There is a lot for schools to manage.

Fifi: It must be stressful as well?

Martine: Very.

Daniel: When I started home schooling, there was some initial confusion about how to hand in school work and using new apps, but we are all now used to it as I am familiar with the technology and it is so much easier now.

Fifi: Ann, do you feel responsible for having to check on Daniel's progress or have you left him alone?

Ann: I encourage Daniel to work independently as much as possible. I look at the app the day before so I know what work is expected to be done for today and I check that the videos are accessible. At the end of each day, Daniel and I have a chat and I ask him what he has learned and ask him questions to check his understanding. It is all a new learning process for myself!

Martine: So Daniel is the one teaching you!

Ann: In the past it was all medical, now it is all new!

Fifi: This is too heavy for me! A new audience question from Abigail.

Martine: My fan! My fan!

Fifi: Actually, this is a question for Daniel, not for Martine! Where do you see yourself in ten years' time?

Daniel: In ten years' time, I will be 24, so I will have finished University with a history degree and hopefully will have done my Teacher of the Deaf qualification.

Martine: Oh!! How exciting!

Fifi: Martine can retire in 10 years' time! (laughing)

Daniel: I would like to help children, and we need more deaf Teachers of the Deaf. Who knows what will happen? Wait and see what happens!

Fifi: You mentioned that you love history, what kind of history are you interested in? Arts?

Daniel: I like a variety of history. I am interested in medical history, Egyptian history, Tudor times, World Wars I and II, Modern history, Cold War, so a wide range of history.

Fifi: Martine did you want to say something?

Martine: Deaf children will be very, very lucky to have Daniel as their Teacher of the Deaf!

Fifi: I totally agree!

Ann: Don't let him become big-headed! (laughing)

Fifi: Another audience question, this time from Kathryn for Martine. Do you have any information regarding dates when peripatetic Teacher of the Deaf will resume home visits again?

Martine: Individual Local Authorities will make their own decisions. My local council decided that from 1st June, regarding any requests from schools for me to do home visits, we have to do a thorough risk assessment and find out the nature of the home visit. Right now, we are only doing remote sessions with families. It will depend on the needs of individual families, in particular if there are vulnerable children. I will be doing a home visit next week due

to an individual family's needs, but this will be done through a window with an interpreter and a translator next to me, I am not sure how this will work. It does all depends on the needs of the individual family. Home visits will depend on the child, the school, the council and the Teacher of the Deaf. This is a difficult question to answer.

Fifi: Will you be wearing a mask for your home visit?

Martine: No I won't be wearing a mask because I need to use my facial expressions. We need to maintain our 1 metre social distancing rules. We will be standing outside the family home, and the family are not allowed to leave their house.

Fifi: So you will be standing outside the house, the neighbours will be watching you.

Martine: I am used to it, as a deaf person people looking at my signing, I am used to it!

Fifi: Next audience question, from Abigail again...

Martine: For me?

Fifi: The question is for Daniel! Who is your role model?

Daniel: I have different role models for current affairs - for politics it is David Buxton, I also look up to Paddy Ladd. Also from deaf education history, Abbe L'Epee who was the first Teacher of the Deaf who promoted sign language. I like individuals from both history and the modern day.

Fifi: Amazing role models! Martine, who was your role model when you were Daniel's age?

Martine: When I was little? Oh, I can't think!...

Fifi: I can't think of anyone from that time... perhaps you can tell me later!

Martine: I was just thinking, I didn't have access to deaf role models when I was Daniel's age as I attended a mainstream school. I can think of plenty of hearing actresses but unfortunately I didn't have any deaf role models then. That would have greatly helped me with my confidence, it is great that Daniel can reel off different Deaf role models. Fifi, you are my role model!

Fifi: Oh! Moving on, another audience question from Kathryn - please fingerspell the app you mentioned?

Daniel: SMHW (Show My Homework).

Fifi: Another audience question from Paulus for Ann, what made you learn to sign up to Level Three?

Ann: I have BSL Level Six.

Fifi: Wow!

Martine: Yeah!

Ann: Three years ago, I was lucky to have a Deaf tutor who not only taught me the language, but also Deaf culture and Deaf history which is important. Sign language is fundamental for communication with Daniel. Through the lockdown, Daniel could have felt isolated because of language barriers, so I feel really lucky that I learned to sign. It is

really important to be able to sign. It is really important for parents of deaf children to be able to sign. I am lucky that the Deaf community has welcomed me with open arms and I do feel included. It is important to me to be part of Daniel's life experience and share experiences with him. I do feel lucky.

Fifi: Daniel is certainly very lucky to have a mother who can sign.

Martine: Yes I totally agree!

Fifi: A lot of deaf children have parents who can't sign which is a great shame. Anyway, another audience question for Daniel from Claire, do you have any tips how to stay motivated with home schooling?

Daniel: It is best to start school work as soon as possible, at 9am so that all the work can be completed then you can relax and switch off. If you start later, you can easily become lazy and feel unable to start your school work. The other tip is to try not to feel stressed with a particular task, if you feel stressed, have a short break and have a drink or go for a local walk. I have a dog, so I stroke and play with my dog,

Martine: Don't forget the biscuits!

Daniel: Yes and the biscuits too!

Ann: You need a daily structure and use your alarm to wake up for continuity as a normal school day. You could offer three choices, such as watching a film, or do something creative or help Mum with cleaning!

Fifi: Life skills! How do you keep yourself fit? Any sport activities?

Daniel: It is hard to go outside, I don't want to go to the beach because it is crowded and it is difficult to keep to social distancing rules. I tend to run around the garden with my dog,

Fifi: Same question to Martine, how do you keep yourself motivated with work?

Martine: Very similarly to Ann and Daniel, I wake up at the same time. When my husband also works from home, we take shifts so that one of us can home school our children while the other one works as it wouldn't be fair on the children if both of us worked at the same time. Especially when I am working remotely, I don't want my children to interrupt me, just as it happened with two children tonight! Where is my husband?!

Fifi: I did notice!

Martine: You saw me with outstretched hands to try to stop them! (laughing)

Fifi: You need to have a word with your husband later!

Martine: If you are watching this, please look after our children! Seriously, this is the reality of our lives, everyone is in the same boat. It is impossible to work at the same level as we normally do, we would just burn out.

Fifi: I think everyone has their own coping strategies to deal with this strange situation. There is no right or wrong, you have to feel comfortable and don't be hard on yourselves.

Martine: What works for me may not work for someone else. What works for Daniel and Ann may not work for others. Whatever works for ourselves.

Fifi: Here is another audience question from Paula for Daniel, were you already familiar with the technology before the lockdown or was it all new to you? How did you deal with this?

Daniel: I was already using SMHW (Show My Homework) before the lockdown so I was already familiar with that app. I have my own laptop but what was new to me was using Zoom.

Fifi: Interesting. Ann, what about yourself?

Ann: I am familiar with WhatsApp and Facebook. Zoom and Microsoft Teams were new to me, but we use them every day now.

Fifi: We will probably continue to use them.

Daniel: We don't know.

Ann: Perhaps. I do prefer face-to-face interaction.

Fifi: Yes I agree. Another audience question for Daniel from Elliot, why and how come did you start your campaign for BSL in GCSE?

Daniel: I believe in equality for all, regardless of whether they are hearing or deaf. There is inequality in GCSEs. Hearing people have GCSEs in English, why don't deaf people have a GCSE in their own language? Isn't this strange? Our Government are not interested in the Deaf community so I have to remind them that we ARE here, we are not invisible. We want GCSE in BSL supported by the Government. So the main aim is to get equality for deaf people.

Fifi: Very good. I have an audience question from Sue for Ann. Do you have any advice for hearing parents with deaf children?

Ann: Oh, a difficult question! For me, don't choose one route of communication. You need to be flexible. I am a strong believer in bilingualism as this is the best way. At the beginning, keep a wide range of communication. If you only focus on speech and lipreading, there is a risk of losing language. We started with Total Communication so that we could see how Daniel prefers to communicate. I am really pleased, because later I realised how lucky we were in making this decision. Daniel is profoundly deaf and BSL is his preferred language. We have no language barriers.

Getting information is important, do learn about deafness, learn your child's language preferences. The other thing is to be assertive with your child's rights. Parents need to be their child's advocate. I used to be passive but since realising that Daniel needs his rights, I have learned to be more assertive. Just enjoy being part of the Deaf community, I certainly feel welcomed and any mistakes I make with my signing, it doesn't matter, as Deaf people do support us. Don't be frightened of the Deaf community. Get involved, as it is your second family.

Martine: (heart) I totally agree!

Fifi: I really want to applaud you Ann, and other hearing parents to learn to sign so that they can communicate with their deaf child.

Ann: Don't make me cry!

Fifi: Martine, as a peripatetic teacher, do you have any tips or advice for parents?

Martine: Every family is different. When a baby is identified deaf, it can be traumatic for the parents, so we always use positive language. In the past, the word “diagnosed” was used which was linked to illness, but we now use the word “identified”. Likewise, we don’t use the word “hearing impaired” we now use the word “deaf”. Some families struggle with the word “deaf” and I ask them what term they would prefer me to use in the initial stages, perhaps they will say “hearing problem” and as they come to terms with the fact that their child is deaf, they adapt and use the term “deaf”.

Your journey is individual to you, everyone’s journey is different. You can only do the best you do with the information that you receive at that moment in time. In the 80s, the focus was on speech and lipreading, and a lot of parents, my mother included, feel bad that they should have learned to sign. I have to remind them that they made decisions at the time with what limited information they had at that particular time. Don’t beat yourself up about it. It is hard for parents but I always try to be a positive deaf role model - I am profoundly deaf, I use a CI and I am bilingual - both speech and sign - like Ann said, don’t focus on one communication mode, use a wide range of communication and keep your options open.

Fifi: I have another audience question from Charlene for Daniel. Has it been difficult for you and your deaf friends doing your school work from home?

Daniel: Everyone is different in how they do their school work and how their own individual schools have set up school work. Different deaf children have different written English levels, I am lucky that I can read English well.

Fifi: I have a last question from the audience, from Paula for Martine. Paula has finished her first year of doing a BSL/English interpreting degree course and is interested in how to become a Teacher of the Deaf. What qualifications do you need to become a Teacher of the Deaf?

Martine: This will depend on where you want to end up. I am an Advisory Teacher of the Deaf...let me go back a bit to make it simpler. You need a University degree first, if you want to be a Primary Teacher, you need a degree in Science, English or Mathematics, then you do another training course to qualify as a Primary school teacher.

If you want to be a Secondary school teacher, you need to have a degree in the subject you want to teach in. For example, Daniel mentioned that he wanted to become a teacher and that he wants to do a history degree, so doing this means that he can become a History teacher after doing a secondary teacher training course. A degree course will take three or four years, then a one year teacher training course. To become a Teacher of the Deaf, you then need to do a two year part-time course. So, there are three stages to get through to become a Teacher of the Deaf. I hope that was clear Paula?

Fifi: I am just reading through the audience questions and comments online, I would like to ask another audience question... oh, there’s a comment from Tracy who says she wants to say a big thank you to Daniel for your campaign on getting GCSE in BSL on the table, a similar comment from James, who says thank you. A comment from Sue who is a CODA, she would pick GCSE in BSL over a foreign language option such as Spanish, French or German, so children of deaf parents and deaf grandparents who grew up with BSL can do this GCSE and she wants to say good luck to Daniel. That is it now.

To the audience, if you would like to watch Daniel and Ann in **I Want to Change the World** talking about the campaign for a GCSE in BSL, it is on the BSL Zone app and website. There are also lots of other programmes for you to watch. Thank you for watching, hope you all enjoyed watching our conversation!

Martine: Bye Abigail!

Fifi: Bye, keep safe and look after yourselves. Goodnight.

