

# Achieving Success

Personal experiences with Cued Speech

## Cued Speech and Cochlear Implantation

**For various reasons deaf children are not always implanted at an optimal early age, but as this story shows, CS will give access to English prior to an implant language which serves as a base once the implant has taken place.**

“ Alexandra's profound sensorineural deafness was diagnosed at 11 months, and after she was fitted with hearing aids, we were encouraged by local professional optimism that she should be able to communicate orally if we followed their advice. At two years of age she was considered to be doing very well. She could identify about 150 individual words which had been laboriously taught to her. However she appeared to understand nothing spoken to her in sentences and her behaviour was very volatile. An Educational Psychologist assessed her as having a social awareness of eleven months.

We discovered Cued Speech by accident. The method seemed thoroughly logical and the anecdotal evidence offered renewed hope to prospects which were looking increasingly bleak. The principles of cueing were relatively easy to learn although it took at least 4 months before sufficient fluency was gained to make it possible to cue everything. Alexandra's progress was remarkable. Within 3 months she had doubled her vocabulary, and after around 8 months she said her first sentence: "Mummy got a yellow coat".

Cued Speech saved our sanity in the early stages: it produced quickly the developments in understanding which professionals were aiming at over a longer period.

However, although her knowledge of English was increasing rapidly with cueing, her articulation remained so poor that her speech was incomprehensible to people outside the family (Alexandra has never tried to cue herself.) As a result, she has been reluctant to talk in front of other people. Her inability to perceive sound also continued to frustrate us as it seemed to contribute to her insensitivity to the feelings of those around her. We were delighted therefore when she was able to have a cochlear implant at 4 1/2 years old.

We have always felt that the foundations of language were laid by Cued Speech, but that cochlear implantation finally opened the door to communication. Prior to the implant, professionals had recognised that her receptive language with Cued Speech appeared to be age appropriate and questions were raised as to

whether Alexandra might have become so dependent on this form of communication that she might experience difficulty in adjusting. In fact, the transition from cueing to fully oral communication happened completely smoothly. After as little as three months, the clarity of her speech improved significantly and other people started to understand her. Cued Speech continued to be valuable in language acquisition for some months to come, reinforcing the links between the language she knew visually and the new sounds she was hearing. Even now it is still invaluable in noisy situations, when the implant is not in use, and in breaking down the sounds in words which hearing children also find difficult!

It is now 4 1/2 years since we learned how to Cue and 2 1/2 years since Alexandra received her cochlear implant. Her progress has been everything we could have hoped for. Her reading age and vocabulary are both above her chronological age and her personality has become more settled. Deafness has ceased to be an insurmountable problem. The only regrets we have are that she didn't receive the benefits of Cued Speech and her cochlear implant much earlier.

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**At Alexandra's 12 month post implant assessment her Teacher of the Deaf, Bill Clark, wrote:**

“ In my 30 years experience of working with profoundly deaf children, I have never witnessed the remarkable progress that Alexandra and her parents have made throughout this year, following implant. In my opinion, Alexandra is a little girl who is now totally oral/aural, in her ability to develop speech and language, and shows listening levels which one would not normally anticipate until at least two or three years of wearing her processor.

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**For training and more information about the use of Cued Speech please contact us:**

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