



Background to Deaf Awareness Week

Previously Deaf Awareness Week had been run by the BDA during October. Many other organisations had used the week to promote their own organisations and objectives, some of which were not necessarily in keeping with the BDA's focus on the Sign Language Community.

In 2001 the BDA took the decision to change the name of the week to Sign Language Week, or Learn to Sign Week, in order to achieve greater focus on their objectives of promoting Sign Language rather than general deafness issues. The reasons for the change of focus for the week were understood. However the change did result in some organisations and deaf individuals, whose focus was not sign language, feeling excluded and the BDA received a number of complaints. In response to this the BDA approached UK Council on Deafness to suggest that it would be an appropriate role for the umbrella organisation to coordinate an awareness week with a general deafness theme that all member organisations could participate in, including organisations that would also be participating in Sign Language Week. The member organisations of UK Council on Deafness supported this initiative and May was chosen.

Deaf Awareness Week is a unique campaign in that so many different organisations participate, each able to promote their own work within the broad spectrum of deafness. It is a fine example of so many organisations collaborating and working together in a joint campaign.

The theme for the week: '**Connect and Communicate**' which aims to highlight the positive outcomes of being deaf aware and how involvement, not only throughout Deaf Awareness Week, but on a daily basis, can continue to improve the understanding of all types of deafness together with the communications methods that can be used.

The role of UK Council on Deafness in Deaf Awareness Week

The principal aim of UK Council on Deafness is to promote the work of the member organisations and therefore the publicity opportunities created by the awareness week are directed towards member organisations.

The new theme this year '**Connect and Communicate**' is a tremendous opportunity to celebrate the positive attitudes to deafness, seek social inclusion and raise awareness of the huge range of organisations both nationally and locally that champion greater deaf awareness and support deaf people and their family and friends.

A series of posters to support the week's activities are available for downloading and we have a DAW calendar for members to publicise their events together with a members "blog" page. This enables us to promote the Deaf Awareness Week campaign to as wide an audience as possible to maximise the positive impact it can have for deaf people.

For further information

Visit the campaign website at www.deafcouncil.org.uk/deafawarenessweek.html