



NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR
Deaf & Hard of Hearing



OUR IMPACT IN 2025

What your support made possible

Residents learning New Zealand Sign Language during a Retirement Village Outreach session — building connection, confidence, and more inclusive communities through shared communication.





Contents



Call direct: 09 307 2922
Toll free: 0800 867 446
Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm

Physical address:
Textile Lofts,
Level 4, 1 Kenwyn Street,
Parnell, Auckland 1052

Postal address:
PO Box 37729,
Parnell, Auckland 1151
enquiries@nfdhh.org.nz
www.nfdhh.org.nz

Charity No. 10300



04

About us

Who we are, what we do, our people and governance

07 Chair's report

08 CEO's report



09

Our impact in 2025

Prevention and early intervention

Access to hearing support

Healthy ageing and later-life hearing health

Inclusive workplaces and systems change

Community voice, connection and innovation

Sustainable leadership and sector impact



21

Looking ahead: 2026 Impact Roadmap



23

Thank you



25

Ways to donate and support our work



About us

Who we are

The National Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NFDHH) is a trusted national charity dedicated to improving hearing health outcomes across Aotearoa New Zealand. We work to prevent hearing loss, support access to hearing care, promote inclusion, and advocate for equitable hearing health services for all.

880,000+*

New Zealanders are Deaf or hard of hearing



Hearing health affects how people learn, work, connect and participate in everyday life — yet it remains one of the most under-addressed areas of public health.

What we do

NFDHH delivers programmes and advocacy across the life course — from early childhood prevention and school-based hearing checks, through to support for older adults, inclusive workplaces and sector leadership. Our work is grounded in evidence, lived experience and strong partnerships with communities, funders and the hearing sector.

We also support youth voice and leadership through our Youth Advisory Group (YAG), ensuring that young people with lived experience help inform programme design, education initiatives and future-facing work, including prevention and safe listening.

How we are governed

NFDHH is governed by an experienced Board and guided by our Member Organisations, who bring sector expertise and leadership across hearing health, disability, education and research. Together, they support strong governance, collaboration and a shared commitment to improving hearing health outcomes nationwide.

Find out more about us





Our Member Organisations



Associate Member Organisations



Our people

Our Board



Steve Smith
BOARD CHAIR



Daniel Reid
BOARD MEMBER



April Johnson
BOARD MEMBER



Joanne Mahon
BOARD MEMBER



Sarah Helm
BOARD MEMBER



Joanna Bourke
BOARD MEMBER



Neil Heslop
BOARD MEMBER

Our Management Team



Natasha Gallardo
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Lisa Talbot
DONOR
ENGAGEMENT
MANAGER



Linda Holmes
COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS
MANAGER



Lettie Bright
PHILANTHROPY
& GRANTS
MANAGER

Find out more about us

Our work is delivered by a dedicated team of staff and volunteers, supported by sector partners nationwide.



Chair's report

Stewardship, confidence and long-term impact

The National Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NFDHH) exists to create lasting improvement in hearing health outcomes for people across Aotearoa New Zealand. In 2025, the Board's focus remained on ensuring the organisation was well governed, financially resilient, and positioned to deliver impact both now and into the future.

Operating in a challenging economic environment, the Board is pleased with the organisation's stability and performance over the year. Through strong governance, active risk management, and prudent financial oversight, NFDHH has continued to deliver its mission while safeguarding the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

A key responsibility of the Board is to ensure that strategy, risk and resources are aligned. In 2025, this included overseeing diversified funding approaches, monitoring financial performance, and supporting investment decisions that balance immediate community need with future impact. The Board remains confident that NFDHH is well positioned to navigate ongoing uncertainty while continuing to grow its reach and influence.

The Board has also been encouraged by progress in areas requiring long-term, sector-wide leadership. The continued development of a National Hearing Health Strategy, aligned with the World Health Organization's *World Report on Hearing*, reflects NFDHH's credibility and role as a trusted contributor to national conversations on hearing health policy and systems change.

Strong governance is only effective when paired with strong leadership and delivery. On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge Chief Executive Natasha Gallardo, the leadership team, staff and volunteers for their professionalism, integrity and commitment throughout the year. Their work ensures NFDHH's strategy is translated into meaningful outcomes for Deaf and hard of hearing communities.

I would also like to thank our donors, funders and partners for their continued trust. Your support enables the Board to steward this organisation with confidence and to ensure NFDHH remains focused on impact, accountability and long-term change.



Through strong governance, active risk management, and prudent financial oversight, NFDHH has continued to deliver its mission while safeguarding the long-term sustainability of the organisation.



Steve Smith
Board Chair

CEO's report

Turning support into impact

Hearing health shapes how people learn, work, connect and participate in everyday life. In 2025, the National Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing remained focused on one clear priority: turning support into practical, measurable impact for Deaf and hard of hearing people across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Throughout the year, our programmes continued to reach people at every stage of life. From early childhood education and school-based hearing checks, through to community education, workplace inclusion and support for older New Zealanders, our teams worked alongside communities to respond to need where it was greatest.

This impact is made possible by trust. Donors, funders and partners enable us to act — whether that means supporting a child to hear clearly in the classroom, helping someone access hearing aids when cost is a barrier, or delivering hearing health education in communities where access has historically been limited. The stories throughout this report reflect the very real difference that support makes in people's lives.

In 2025, we also continued to strengthen how we work with communities. Our Pasifika Community

Engagement Programme reinforced the importance of culturally grounded delivery, while consultation with the Deaf community on emerging technologies — including the NZSL Avatar — demonstrated our commitment to listening first and co-designing solutions. These approaches ensure our programmes remain relevant, trusted and effective.

Alongside delivery, we invested in leadership and systems change. Our contribution to the development of a National Hearing Health Strategy reflects our commitment to evidence-informed practice and to shaping long-term change beyond individual programmes.

Looking ahead, the priorities outlined in our 2026 roadmap build directly on this momentum. We will continue to expand prevention and early intervention, strengthen access and inclusion, and deepen partnerships — guided by equity, lived experience and measurable impact.

I would like to sincerely thank our donors, funders and partners for their generosity and belief in this work. I also want to acknowledge the dedication of the NFDHH team and volunteers. Their care, professionalism and commitment sit behind every programme delivered and every person reached. It is a privilege to work alongside them as we continue to build a more inclusive and hearing-healthy future.



From early childhood education and school-based hearing checks, through to community education, workplace inclusion and support for older New Zealanders, our teams worked alongside communities to respond to need where it was greatest.



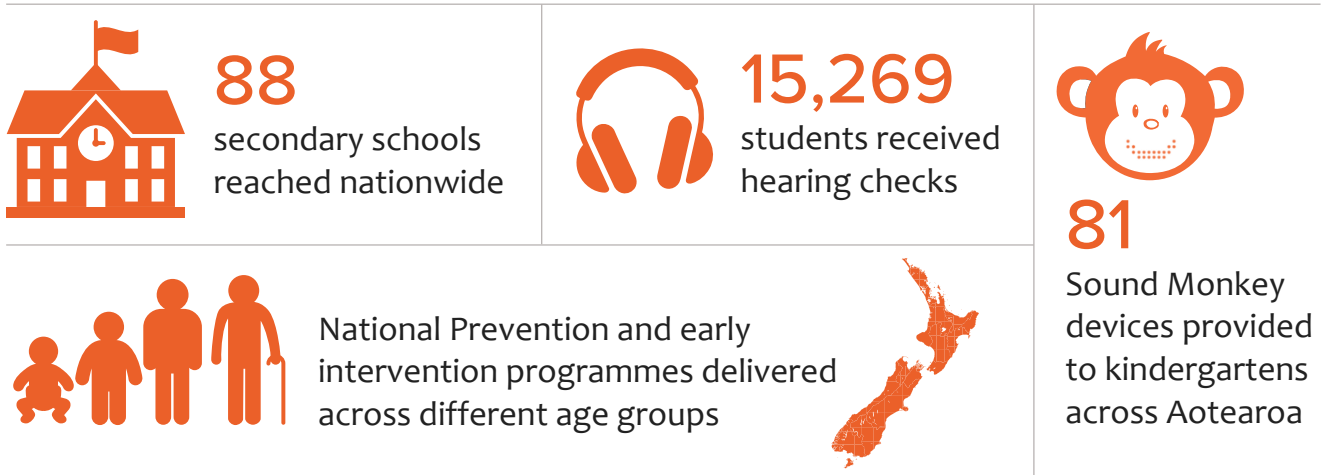
Natasha Gallardo
Chief Executive



Our impact in 2025

1. Prevention and early intervention

Impact at a glance



Why this matters

Nearly 60% of childhood hearing loss is preventable. Early education and timely screening help children develop safe listening habits and identify hearing issues before they affect learning, confidence and long-term wellbeing.





Community voice

Early hearing check changed Luke's future

When 14-year-old Luke took part in our school hearing screening, it revealed a hearing issue that had gone unnoticed for years. What adults once assumed was “not listening” suddenly made sense. The screening provided clarity, early referral, and access to support at a critical time — helping Luke and his family understand what was happening and take action before it affected his learning, wellbeing, and confidence. As a passionate young musician, Luke is now better equipped to protect his hearing and navigate the next steps in his journey, showing how early intervention can be truly life-changing

Support the School Hearing
Screening Programme



[www.nfdhh.org.nz/
hearing-screening](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/hearing-screening)



Early-years prevention: Sound Monkey

Additional prevention impact

<p>81 </p> <p>Sound Monkey devices distributed to kindergartens nationwide</p>	<p></p> <p>Funded through donor and partner support</p>	<p></p> <p>Supporting safe listening habits through play-based learning</p>
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Why this matters

Early childhood is a critical period for establishing safe listening habits. The Sound Monkey makes sound levels visible and understandable, helping children learn about safe listening from an early age.



Community voice

“The children just love the Sound Monkey and keep an eye on its smile. They are very quick to notice the change of colour and tell staff. The older children tell the younger children that they have to be quiet because the monkey’s smile has changed.”
Busy Bees Coopers Beach



2. Access to hearing support

Removing financial barriers to life-changing hearing aids

Impact at a glance



30

Hearing Aid Grants provided in 2025



\$500

per grant, supporting people facing financial hardship



Additional applicants supported through referral partnerships



Why this matters

The cost of hearing aids remains a significant barrier for many New Zealanders. Without support, hearing loss can affect work, family life, mental health and social connection.



Community voice

How the Hearing Aid Fund restored relief and stability

In early 2024, 34-year-old Ripeka suddenly lost hearing in her right ear following a period of illness and high stress. What began as a loud, persistent squealing quickly developed into severe hearing loss and constant tinnitus.

Months of medical appointments brought

little resolution. Everyday life became exhausting — work, parenting, and social situations all felt harder as background noise overwhelmed her ability to process speech.

When an audiologist confirmed severe sensorineural hearing loss and recommended a hearing aid, the cost presented a significant barrier. Through

the Hearing Aid Fund, Ripeka was able to access support without delay.

“The biggest change has been the reduction in tinnitus,” she shares. “The constant ocean-like sound has quietened to the point where I barely notice it. That relief has made everyday life manageable again.”

The Fund provided more than financial assistance — it offered timely intervention at a critical moment, restoring clarity, reducing stress, and helping Ripeka regain control.

Now a regular supporter of NFDHH, Ripeka pays forward the support she received so others facing hearing loss can access the help they need.



“I am truly grateful for the generosity of donors, who make the Hearing Aid Fund possible.”

Ripeka, Hearing Aid Grant recipient



3. Healthy ageing and later-life hearing health

Supporting independence, confidence and connection as people age

Impact at a glance



91
retirement village workshops
delivered nationwide



400+
hearing checks
completed onsite



Continued growth
in participation
and reach



Why this matters

Early identification and management of hearing loss supports communication, independence and social connection, and is associated with reduced risk of cognitive decline.



Community voice

Hearing support helped us stay connected

At Remuera Rise retirement village, residents John and Gillian know firsthand what it means to rediscover connection through better hearing.

“I thought I was answering people’s questions,” John recalls, “but too often I found out I’d answered the wrong one. I simply hadn’t heard properly.” For Gillian, it was her family who finally made her realise: “Mum, you’re not listening. Listen to us.”

Like so many senior New Zealanders, hearing loss crept in slowly — unnoticed at first, then life-changing. Gillian says getting hearing aids transformed her social life:

“I can join the group conversations again, especially at happy hour. Before, I would just sit quietly. Now I’m part of it.”

John is quick to point out that hearing health isn’t just about conversation. “As your programme is demonstrating,

it is so important to keep your hearing to protect your cognitive ability as we get older. Hearing loss contributes to early onset dementia. If you don’t want to go down that track, you really should do something about it.”

This is why our Retirement Village Outreach Programme goes beyond free hearing checks. We deliver workshops that explain how untreated hearing loss can accelerate cognitive decline — and how early intervention, like hearing aids, can help protect memory, independence, and quality of life.

“As your programme is demonstrating, it is so important to keep your hearing to protect your cognitive ability as we get older.” John



**A donation to our charity
can help restore connection
for our older Kiwis.**



[www.nfdhh.org.nz/
retirement-villages](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/retirement-villages)



4. Inclusive workplaces and systems change

Creating workplaces where Deaf and hard of hearing people can thrive

Impact at a glance

 <p>44 workplace workshops delivered nationwide</p>	 <p>17 organisations now part of the Hearing Accredited Workplace Programme</p>	 <p>Growing demand for practical inclusion training</p>
 <p>10 new organisations accredited in 2025</p>		



Why this matters

Workplaces play a critical role in enabling Deaf and hard of hearing people to participate fully in employment. Practical awareness, accessible communication and organisational commitment support inclusive cultures and better outcomes.



Community voice

Workplace inclusion in practice

Through the Hearing Accredited Workplace Programme, organisations across Aotearoa are embedding hearing awareness into everyday workplace practice. Training and accreditation help employers move beyond compliance toward meaningful inclusion.

Across the programme, participating organisations

report increased confidence, improved accessibility practices and a stronger shared understanding of hearing inclusion — creating workplaces where people can contribute fully and feel supported.

Westpac continues to demonstrate what genuine workplace inclusion looks like in practice. Through their Hearing Accredited Workplace (HAWP) journey,

teams across Westpac have embedded practical changes that improve accessibility for Deaf and hard of hearing staff and customers — from live captioning as standard practice in meetings to inclusive emergency procedures and acoustically considered workspaces. By pairing policy with action, Westpac has shown how learning builds empathy and leads to meaningful, organisation-wide change.



“While we ran the workshop and online hearing testing, people understood my needs more. Showing learning creates empathy”

Employee with hearing loss, Westpac Bank.

Learn more about the workshops from which your workplace can benefit.



www.nfdhh.org.nz/hearing-accreditation



5. Community voice, connection and innovation

Listening first — and co-designing with community

Impact at a glance



13 Pasifika community groups engaged through screenings and education



Youth Advisory Group established



NZSL Avatar launched as a **community consultation and feedback tool**



Strong growth in digital reach and participation



Why this matters

Trust, cultural safety and lived experience are essential to addressing hearing health inequities and ensuring new approaches are shaped by the communities they are intended to serve.



Community voice



Respectful, culturally grounded engagement

Through the Pasifika Community Engagement Programme, NFDHH delivered hearing screenings and education in trusted community settings. In one Tongan community group, screenings revealed significant unmet need, reinforcing the importance of culturally responsive approaches and clear referral pathways.

“We deeply value the alofa, care, and expertise NFDHH has brought into our space. Their respectful and inclusive approach has made a meaningful impact.”

Vaka Tautua, Pasifika community partner



NZSL Avatar consultation

The NZSL Avatar was launched to gather feedback from the Deaf community on the potential and limitations of this technology, ensuring any future use is guided by Deaf-led perspectives.

“It’s time the Deaf community was given the same access as the hearing community.”



6. Sustainable leadership and sector impact

Driving long-term change in hearing health across Aotearoa

Impact at a glance



Draft **National Hearing Health Strategy** completed



Stakeholder database expanded and sector re-engagement underway



Continued alignment with the **WHO World Report on Hearing** and disability rights principles



Why this matters

System-level leadership is essential to address rising hearing loss, inequitable access to services and the long-term sustainability of hearing health care in New Zealand.



Looking ahead: 2026 Impact Roadmap

What your support will help deliver next

The impact outlined in this report has been made possible through the generous support of our donors, funders and partners, alongside careful financial stewardship. As we look to 2026, our focus remains on sustaining what works, responding to emerging need, and investing in initiatives that deliver long-term, equitable hearing health outcomes across Aotearoa New Zealand.

In 2026, NFDHH will build on the momentum of 2025 by expanding prevention and early intervention, strengthening

access to hearing support, deepening community partnerships, and continuing to lead system-level change. This roadmap sets out the outcomes your continued support will help achieve in the year ahead.

Our 2026 impact priorities

Sector leadership and system change

Finalise the Draft National Hearing Health Strategy for Aotearoa NZ, strengthening national coordination and alignment with the World Health Organization’s *World Report on Hearing*.

Our aim is to award

60
Hearing Aid Grants



Hearing Aid Fund

Award **60 Hearing Aid Grants** of \$500 each and publish **six or more impact stories** demonstrating the difference donor support makes in people’s lives.

Youth hearing health

Deliver the School Hearing Screening Programme in **100 secondary schools**, screen **at least 20,000 students**, publish an insights report, and



Our aim is to reach

100

secondary schools in 2026



Our aim is to reach

140

Retirement Villages in 2026



Our aim is to deliver

65

workplace workshops in 2026



implement a refreshed *Make Listening Safe* programme co-designed with the Youth Advisory Group.

Youth Advisory Group

Support authentic youth voice by engaging **6–8 members**, delivering bi-monthly meetings, and supporting at least **one youth-led project** with documented outcomes.

Healthy ageing and later-life hearing health

Deliver **140 retirement village workshops**, capture participant feedback for **80% or more** of workshops, and strengthen referral pathways through audiology partnerships.

Inclusive workplaces

Deliver **65 workplace workshops**, welcome **10 new Hearing Accredited Workplaces**, and maintain **90% or higher satisfaction** across training delivery.

Community connection and reach

Grow digital reach and engagement, publish new community stories and short-form videos, and strengthen partner amplification to increase awareness and participation.

New programmes launching in 2026

Launch the **Pasifika Community Engagement Programme** in Auckland, reaching over **500 people** through culturally responsive screening and education, and introduce **Game On! Deaf Awareness in Sports**, supporting inclusive participation through targeted training and partnerships.



Thank you

A big thank you to our corporate partners for making this work possible.

If you are interested in a corporate partnership, please get in touch: lettie.bright@nfdhh.org.nz



We extend our sincere thanks to funders and donors whose support has enabled NFDHH to deliver meaningful impact for Deaf and hard of hearing people across Aotearoa New Zealand in 2025.



Continued...





Ways to donate and support our work

Your support helps more people hear, connect and thrive

Your support makes it possible for NFDHH to prevent hearing loss, improve access to hearing care, promote inclusion, and advocate for equitable hearing health outcomes across Aotearoa New Zealand.

There are many ways to support our work. You can make a one-off or regular donation to support our programmes nationwide, partner with us to deliver targeted initiatives where the need is greatest, or leave a gift in your will to create lasting impact for future generations.

Sharing our work and advocating for hearing health within your networks also helps amplify impact. To learn more about how you can support NFDHH, visit nfdhh.org.nz or contact our team on 0800 867 446 or email us at enquiries@nfdhh.org.nz.

Together, we can ensure more people have the opportunity to hear, participate and belong.



Thank you for
your generosity

Give a one off
donation here:



Set up a regular
donation here:





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Deaf & Hard of Hearing

nfdhh.org.nz