

Deaf Perspectives: Past, Present and future

Evaluation report

Claire Driver, November 2025



*This type of project helps us to feel really positive
about our deaf identity.*

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1. Introduction

Let me ask you something – how often do you see Deaf people truly represented on screen? Not just characters, but real stories, told by Deaf voices? Today, we're proud to introduce films that do exactly that.

Deri O'Regan, Headteacher King Edward VI School

In 2025 The Offshoot Foundation was awarded £63,202 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Deaf Perspectives: Past, Present and Future. Offshoot is a registered charity using film and media to empower young and disadvantaged people across the UK, telling untold stories and tackling important social issues. The project aimed to raise awareness of what it was like to be deaf historically, what it is like to be deaf today, and what life might look like for deaf people in the future. The idea originated with staff and students at the Deaf Resource Base at King Edward VI School in Bury St Edmunds. In 2023 the school took part in Deaf Perspectives: Past and Present, a music and photography project funded by Arts Council England and in partnership with Suffolk Archives, Orchestras Live, Britten Sinfonia and Suffolk Music Education Hub. At the end of that project both students and The Offshoot Foundation wanted to do more to raise deaf awareness and to reach larger audiences beyond the schools involved. Deaf Perspectives Past, Present and Future builds upon the success of this project, with greater engagement with Suffolk schools, students and the wider community.

An additional £1500 was awarded to the project by The Casey Trust.

1.1 Deaf Perspectives aims and activities

The ambition for the project was to **explore different aspects of deaf life in the past, present and future** by creating short films with deaf and hearing young people. Specifically, the project would:

- Develop young people's skills, confidence and connection.
- Improve Deaf awareness.
- Research and preserve Deaf history and heritage in Suffolk and share this with a wider audience.

To achieve this the project would:

- Engage 30 deaf and hearing young people. Participants to come from the Deaf Resource Base at King Edward VI School in Bury St Edmunds and deaf and hearing students at Northgate High School in Ipswich. Workshops to be delivered on site at each school, with an introductory session delivered to the groups together. Joint visits to Cambridge University and Suffolk Archives, and joint filming opportunities, to give students the chance to come together and get to know each other.
- Give students creative control over the themes, content and style of the films. Through the filmmaking process students to learn new practical filmmaking skills (presenting,

interviewing, filming, editing) and soft skills (planning, communication, teamwork). Eligible students to be awarded an AQA Certificate in filmmaking.

- Provide historical research on the life stories of deaf people in the past and interview deaf role models today. This research to be included in the films. Films and resources to be deposited at Suffolk Archives to preserve them for the future.
- Create quality films that students can take pride in, resulting in increased confidence. The films become resources for schools and bring local Deaf history to a wider audience.
- Screen the film to an audience of 120 people.
- Recruit a project co-ordinator and team of freelancers.
- Ensure all digital outputs are accessible and safely deposited for future use and research.
- Maintain high standards of accessibility and inclusivity.

2. Evaluation Methodology

This external evaluation describes the delivery of Deaf Perspectives: Past, Present and Future, measures what has been achieved against the intended aims, and documents additional activities. It considers what worked well and the development of this work in future. Many thanks go to everyone who contributed to the evaluation process.

Evaluation planning used a logic model to link activities to the intended outcomes. This process identified specific areas for evaluation and questions for surveys, feedback conversations and sessions. Areas identified for evaluation are **Skills, confidence and connection, Deaf Awareness** and **Deaf History and Heritage**. This is summarised below.

AIM: Develop young people's skills, confidence and connection	
Short term outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students learn new practical filmmaking skills (interviewing, filming, presenting, scripting). - Students learn soft skills (communication, planning, teamwork, problem solving, social interactions, meeting new people). - Students take pride in the quality of the final work. Medium term outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students feel connected and a sense of belonging. 	Measures of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students report and demonstrate new skills and confidence. - Teachers recognise new skills and confidence in young people. - Parent/carer responses report confidence. - Students describe feeling proud and being part of something. - Number of students awarded AQA certificates.
AIM: Improve Deaf awareness	
Short term outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People are aware of Deaf history. - Deaf students' experiences are shared with a wider audience. - Students are introduced to positive role models. Medium / long term outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater Deaf awareness in schools. 	Measures of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of films and resources created. - Number views of films. - Responses describe new awareness and learning. - Responses describe intention to do or change something.
AIM: Research and preserve Deaf history and heritage in Suffolk and share this with a wider audience	
Short term outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New deaf histories are collected and preserved. - Deaf community's intangible heritage is collected and preserved. 	Measures of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of films made and resources created.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deaf history and heritage resources are shared. <p>Medium / long term outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deaf history in Suffolk is better preserved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of resources deposited at Suffolk Archives / made available in other places. - Number of BSL films / resources
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Evaluation questions:

Skills, confidence and connection	<p>What new skills have been learnt?</p> <hr/> <p>Do young people feel more confident?</p> <hr/> <p>Do young people feel more connected?</p>
Deaf awareness	<p>What has the experience been for deaf young people?</p> <hr/> <p>What have people learnt about deafness or deaf history? Have people thought differently because of Deaf Perspectives?</p>
Deaf history and heritage in Suffolk	<p>What history and heritage was collected and preserved?</p> <hr/> <p>How has intangible culture been captured?</p> <hr/>

2.1 Summary of methods

A mixed methods approach collected qualitative and quantitative evidence over the delivery of the project. Evidence used in this report was gathered from:

- **Regular progress meetings with the project co-ordinator.** These catch-up conversations made sure that the project was captured in the delivery phase including any changes or unexpected outcomes.
- **Student skills and confidence survey** at the start and end of engagement (12 responses at the start, 19 responses at the end).
- **Evaluation session with students** at the end of the project to collect responses to prompts '*I am Proud of,*' '*What Went Well,*' '*Even Better If*' (22 participants, 68 comments).
- **School staff interviews** at both schools (5 participants across both schools).
- **Phone and online interview with project volunteers** (4 volunteers) to consider motivations, learning and progression of the research.

- **Audience survey** sent to attendees after the public screening (22 responses in total, 16 general audience, 6 family responses).
- **Evaluation session with Deaf Perspectives team** at the end of the project (Offshoot CEO, Director, Filmmaker, Project co-ordinator).
- **Attendance at workshops and visits.** Attendance at one workshop at each of the schools and the university visit.
- **Legacy project: Primary school children's feedback** to prompts '*What will you tell someone about today?*', '*What can you do now?*' (24 responses from two schools).
- **Primary school teacher feedback received by email** (2 responses).
- **Project photos and quotes.**
- **Deaf Perspectives films and interviews.**

2.2 Limitations of the evaluation evidence

The number of student responses to the skills and confidence survey at the start and end are different (12 responses at the start and 19 at the end). This means there is an incomplete baseline picture of participant confidence in each of the measured areas. However, used with supporting comments from young people, staff and parents the data collected is still valuable.

The response to the audience survey was lower than hoped but remains valuable. Many of the audience were part of a family group so the responses are likely to represent a number of people in attendance.

Medium and long-term outcomes fall beyond the timeframe of this evaluation but intention to action anything as a result of the project has been noted.

3. What did Deaf Perspectives do?

The project was delivered in two school terms from January 2025 to July 2025. Legacy projects were approved by NLHF and funded through a project underspend which extended the project into autumn 2025.

3.1 Filmmaking workshops

23 young people took part. Students were in years 7-10 from King Edward VI School and in year 9 at Northgate High School. Deaf and hearing students took part.

The Offshoot team delivered three filmmaking skills workshops. The first workshop in the programme was delivered jointly to both groups and was an opportunity for students to get to know each other. Workshops two and three covered practical skills (using cameras, lighting, sound), presenting and interviewing skills, narrative structure and scripting.

Students then took part in ideas sessions to shape the content of the films and joined smaller working groups.



Pupils from both schools at the first filmmaking workshop

3.2 Historical research

Five volunteer researchers used the 1911 census to find and record the details of deaf people living in Suffolk in the past. The result is a **database of 578 deaf people** with information about their deafness, for example, if they had been deaf their whole lives or lost

their hearing as children, and about their lives including people who married, had children and occupations. This research fed into the filmmaking process and is deposited at Suffolk Archives where it can be used for further study.

3.3 Visits

Students visited the University of Cambridge and Suffolk Archives.

At Cambridge, the Deaf Perspectives students met three deaf undergraduates and a partially deaf university lecturer. They went on a tour of the city, of two colleges and took part in a Q&A session with the undergraduate students and lecturer.

At Suffolk Archives, the group took part in an introduction to archives session, tour of the archives and document session, and a Q&A session with a deaf Archive Assistant.

The undergraduate students, lecturer and Archive Assistant were interviewed for the project.



Suffolk Archives visit



Cambridge University visit

3.4 Short films

Eight short films were created. These are a project overview/introduction, and individual films Deafness and Education, Our Top Tips for Hearing People, Being Deaf at University, The Evolution of Hearing Technology, The World of Work, The BSL GCSE, and Can, not Can't: a BSL performance.

The films are available at:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhy22vs_XD686_PM7-clSLdt71g6AwyWq

<https://www.theoffshootfoundation.co.uk/deaf-perspectives-past-present-and-future/>

All the films have BSL interpretation and subtitles.

The films have been deposited at Suffolk Archives.

3.5 Film screenings and views

110 people attended the main film screening event at The Hold, Suffolk Archives for participants, families, supporters and contributors. Each school held additional screenings.

At the time of reporting, the Deaf Perspectives playlist on YouTube has been **viewed 1144 times**.

All the spoken parts of the screening (introductions, thank you etc) were BSL interpreted and subtitled.



Introduction to film screening with students, showing how spoken parts were subtitled and signed

3.6 AQA certificates

23 students were awarded AQA certificates in Research and Documentary Film Production.

3.7 Films deposited at Suffolk Archives

Eight short films, 17 interviews made with contributors and students as part of the filmmaking process, and 4 'bonus' films (2 longer form interviews and 2 short films made with deaf primary school students) have been deposited. All films have subtitles and most have BSL interpretation.

3.8 Accessibility

All participants and contributors were consulted throughout on their preferred communication styles. Where appropriate BSL interpreters were brought in. The films are all subtitled and most have BSL interpretation.

3.9 Legacy activities

22 children took part in filmmaking workshops at Westgate Primary School in Bury St Edmunds and Rushmere Primary School in Ipswich. These sessions worked with young people

at the schools' Deaf Resource Bases. Feedback from these sessions has been included in the evaluation.

Two additional interviews were collected.

The historical research has been written up to be published online and research materials deposited at Suffolk Archives, making the research accessible in the future.



Filming at one of the primary schools

4. What difference has Deaf Perspectives made?

4.1 Skills, confidence and connection

What new skills have been learnt? What difference has been made?

Student responses to the skills and confidence survey show that students learnt new skills. The survey asked participants how confident they felt in practical skills for filmmaking (researching, interviewing, presenting, scripting, filming) at the start and end of the project. Figure 1 shows the

percentage of total responses for 'Not confident', 'A bit Confident', 'Very confident'. Overall, a greater percentage of young people felt very confident (an increase from 25% to 35%) or a bit confident (an increase from 47% to 55%) at the end than at the start and fewer people felt not confident (a decrease from 28% to 11%).

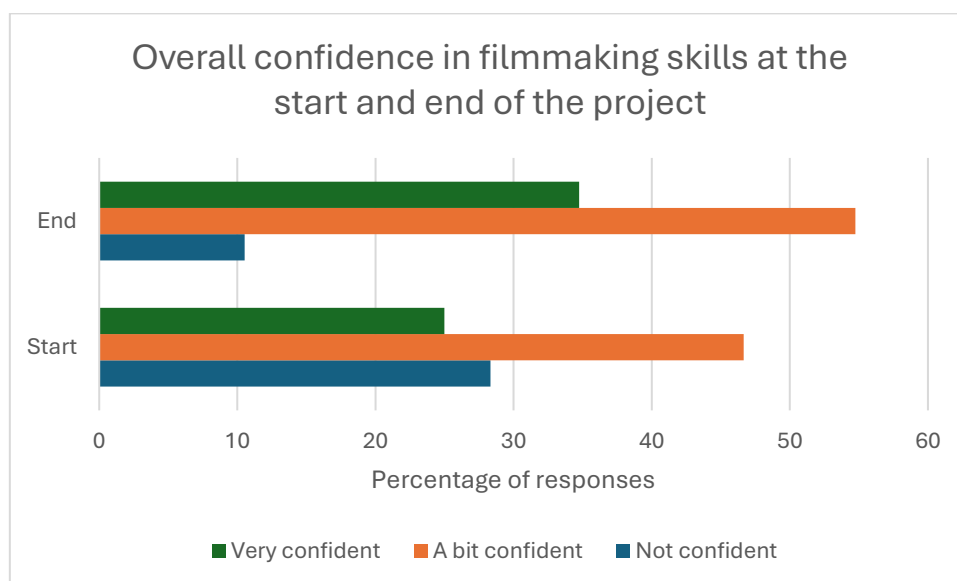


Figure 1 Results of the student skills and confidence survey. Results are given as a percentage of the total responses at the start and end and show overall increased confidence in practical filmmaking skills.

Taking the skills separately, students felt more confident at the end of the project in all areas of filmmaking except scripting which remained unchanged (Figure 2). The greatest increase in confidence was in filming where all students felt at least 'a bit confident' in their skills by the end. The unchanged result for scripting could reflect individual preferences for the parts of the filmmaking process although it is unknown if it is the same people answering 'not confident' at both the beginning and end. Scripting and research were the areas people felt least confident in at the start and an increased focus on these might be helpful in future development. It would be interesting to know if this links to students' general confidence in English / written English skills and this is something that could be considered in future planning with teachers and baseline questions.

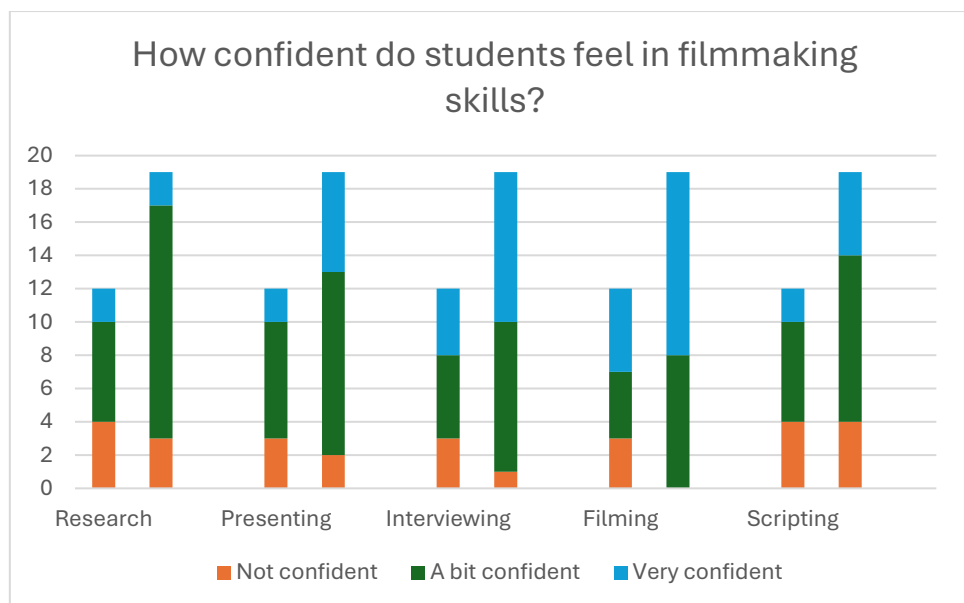


Figure 2 Results of student skills and confidence survey by research, presenting, interviewing, filming and scripting skills. Responses show increased confidence in all skills by the end of the project except scripting which remained the same. Results are based on 12 responses at the start of the project and 19 responses at the end.

All 23 participants were awarded an AQA certificate in Research and Film making. The Offshoot team managed assessment for the unit which was based on students working in teams to complete and demonstrate the skills required. These were:

- **Practical skills:** Use of equipment; Filming basic shot types; Basic editing; Basic interview skills and techniques.
- **Soft skills:** Using feedback to reflect on team progress e.g. from peers, teachers, facilitators; Interview skills and techniques, e.g. creating open questions, conducting an interview, presenting to camera.
- **Deaf history and heritage:** Using resources at Suffolk Archives, internet sources, current deaf role models to research deaf history; Create a short film, as a team, on Deaf History in Suffolk; How to use the medium of documentary film to investigate and present ideas to inform and engage an audience.

Teachers recognised that students' soft skills developed during the project and noted that students improved their teamwork and ability to plan their work. By the end students demonstrated greater confidence to share ideas in their teams, communicate with one another and the wider project team. Working in small teams was helpful, particularly for quieter students who were more comfortable to share their ideas and speak in a smaller group. Teachers also noted the cross curricular benefits of taking part – while students were busy making films, they were learning history and practising their communication skills.



Discussing camera set up for an interview

Do young people feel more confident? What difference has been made?

You really brought out my confidence, even though I could not pronounce the words right you never gave up on me.

This whole thing built my confidence. This filming shows a lot about deafness and it shows what we can do in the future.

Students said their confidence had improved. At the end of the project, 84% of respondents to the skills and confidence survey agreed they felt more confident to try new things, 84% agreed they did something they didn't know they were capable of and 58% respondents felt taking part had opened their minds to new possibilities (Figure 3).

Over half of student comments to the prompt 'I am proud of' mentioned being confident or increased confidence (55%). Confidence to speak on camera and to interview people was mentioned along with moving beyond their comfort zone to try new things and to put themselves into new situations. Students said they were proud of themselves for taking part and proud of everyone's effort in creating the films and in improving Deaf awareness.

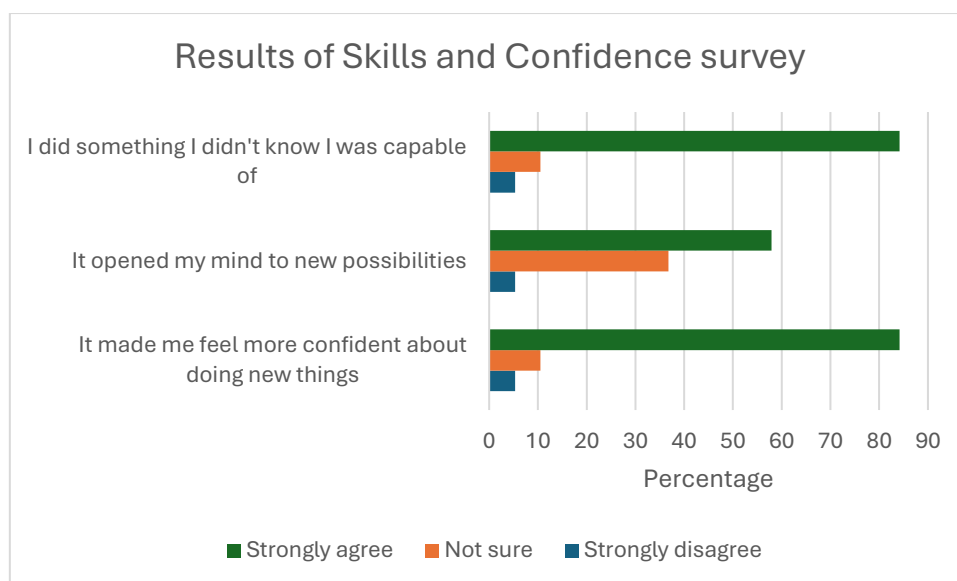


Figure 3 Results of the skills and confidence survey based on 19 student responses shows that students strongly agreed they felt more confident, able to try new things and be open to new possibilities as a result of taking part in Deaf Perspectives.

Teachers noticed increased confidence in all their students. They saw increased confidence to be part of the team and to express themselves, their confidence to use BSL and to vocalise. This was particularly noted for students whose speech was not well formed. Teachers are keen to harness these feelings and one teacher said she planned to use a fake moustache from the films as a visual reminder for the students of the confidence and positivity created on the project.

Parents noticed a willingness for their children to try new things. One parent commented that the project had given their child stronger self-awareness and self-esteem because they felt more able to communicate. Confidence to advocate for themselves and for others was mentioned in teacher and parent feedback. One teacher reflected that it was inspiring for the young people to hear the university students describe how they self-advocate. Parents thought their children were better able to speak up if things are not how they need to be because of the recognition they felt as being part of the Deaf Perspectives project.

He is so much more confident and it has enabled him to become an advocate for all disadvantaged people. (Parent)

The project team observed students' increased willingness to participate. Students showed resilience to keep trying with things they found difficult including speaking on camera. By the end of filming everyone volunteered to be on camera and at the screening students volunteered to speak to the audience despite their nerves.

Do young people feel more connected? What difference has been made?

I am proud of stepping out of a bubble and earning new friends.

Friendship, spending time making friends or being with friends was a highlight of the project for many students. One student commented: *People made friends*. Another student said how being part of a team contributed to the strength of the work produced: *It was amazing we got along really well. I think that's why the films came out amazing*.

Working with the other school came out in responses to '*Even Better If*'. Students wanted to visit and film with the other school more often. When the King Edward students visited Northgate, they enjoyed seeing another school as well as the students. Creating opportunities for this connection between young people is especially important for young deaf students who are at risk of social isolation.

Teachers commented on the students' developing connection with one another, saying that bonds had been strengthened in their own schools across the year groups. The project team noticed how students gelled in their own school groups and in their friendships with students at the other school. This was shown in increased mixing between the groups at joint sessions and the visits. Initial hesitation about how successful it would be bringing the two schools together was quickly overcome as students found they had things in common with each other. This can be considered for future projects involving different schools although it was not always easy to manage.



Friendships were strengthened and formed within and between the groups

Skills, confidence and connection conclusion

Students feel more confident and more connected because of Deaf Perspectives. They feel connected within their own schools, across year groups and with students in the other school. Working across the two schools increased the impact of the project on young people as the wider scope required collaborative working, building relationships and communication skills. Students enjoyed working with the Offshoot team who skilfully created a supported and safe learning environment for students to try new things. Taking part has been enjoyable and always purposeful which has aided skills development. It might be helpful if more time was given to elements of the process students were less sure of, in this case research and scripting, and consultation with the teachers ahead of time on that could be useful.

4.2 Deaf awareness

What has the experience been for deaf young people?

Student voice throughout has been very strong. (Teacher comment)

Young people enjoyed taking part and enjoyed sharing their learning. Responses to the prompt ‘*What Went Well*’ show that young people felt they had been listened to and were able to be themselves and express their deaf identity. One student commented: *I love that I could be who I truly was.*

Students created films to explore topics that interested them, including tips to help hearing students talk to deaf students and Can, Not Can’t, a funny BSL performance with the message that deaf students can do anything a hearing student can do. These gave students a chance to send powerful and honest messages to their peers and teachers and can be used as tools to educate and potentially remove barriers for deaf students in school.

The project team was honest in being guided by deaf people. Everything in the films was created or approved by the young people which empowered students to be in control of what they wanted to share. This made the experience memorable and relevant. One student commented that: *Deaf people were accurately represented.*

Students, teachers and parents reflected on the opportunities to meet and learn from deaf people, as interviewees, contributors to the films and on the university visit. Parents shared that their children talked at home about the experiences of some of the people they had met, including BSL GCSE campaigner Daniel Jillings, playwright Eloise Pennycott and Teacher of the Deaf Alison Berry. These meetings had been memorable and inspiring. Visiting a university extended awareness of the educational opportunities for deaf people and was well-timed to show future pathways for KS3 students. Students actively participated in the Q&A session at Cambridge University and one student asked after the visit: *‘do you think this could be a possibility?’*

Have people learnt about deafness or deaf history through the project?

I have a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers deaf students face when accessing education and how a lot of these concerns can fall through the cracks. (Audience comment)

After the screening, 95% respondents to the audience survey said they have learnt something new about deaf history. 91% responded that they have new understanding about the deaf community. Examples of learning were about the history of hearing aid technology and the use of sign language in schools. The films made participants and audiences aware of different people's positive and negative experiences.

There were unexpected outcomes from the screening. A doctor said the films filled a gap in their knowledge and training that they will now take forward into their work: *Such a beautiful project. As an incoming F1 doctor medical school hasn't touched on any of this so it's great to go to a grassroots project like this.* Other responses from adult interviewees were that they found the films 'validating' and truly representative. These comments show the impact of the project beyond the schools and points to the potential of this and future work in wider spheres.

The films are publicly available online and continued signposting to them by the team, participants and supporters and at events can grow their audience. Schools and audience members also shared their hopes for the films, that the information and messages can be even more widely shared. One school are planning to use the films as part of their staff deaf awareness training.

Volunteers came to the project with different levels of awareness of deaf history. They shared their learning and reflections about the experiences and life opportunities for deaf people in the past.

The team observe that hearing students at Northgate School learnt a lot and took the initiative to run deaf awareness sessions in their school during the project.

Offshoot shared project progress and the final films on social media to a wider audience including creative and heritage professionals on LinkedIn. One of the interviewees, Stephen Iliffe shared the films with his 500+ followers.

Deaf awareness conclusion

The project is valuable in raising deaf awareness. It has given a platform for students to share their thoughts and a confidence to them to advocate for themselves when something is not as it should be. It has helped adults see situations from the students' point of view, particularly in the classroom. Interviewing a range of people of different ages and presenting their reflections on negative experiences in school for example, brings extra focus to the experiences of deaf students in the present.

4.3 Deaf history and heritage in Suffolk

What history and heritage was collected and preserved?

13 interviews were collected with people of different ages and life stages including students, university students, working age adults and retired people and a range of professions and diversity of positive and negative experiences. Three interviews were made with young people and one interview with schoolteachers. Clips of these were used in the final films and informed the young people's interpretation of the themes. The full interviews collect new deaf stories and are preserved at Suffolk Archives which permanently enhances the collection with deaf history.

The film about deaf education considered the different experiences of Suffolk people of the education system. It presented what access to education a deaf child in the early 20th century had and the limited choice of schools they could attend. This drew upon some of the research from the 1911 census undertaken by the project volunteers. Descriptions of oralism in schools, that required children to only lip read and speak and prohibited signing, had an impact on students, project team and the audience. More positive narratives were created in the films describing the campaign for the BSL GCSE and the development of hearing technology. This film in particular stood out as memorable and the comprehensive research into the range of different hearing aids today and in the past, and the humorous presentation by the students, helped people to learn more about this part of deaf people's lives.



Interviewing Alison Berry about her experiences of school as a deaf pupil and her career as a Teacher of the Deaf

How has intangible deaf cultural heritage been collected?

‘Signing is their culture’ (Teacher comment)

Capturing the Deaf community’s intangible heritage on film was identified as a challenge for the project. The team recognised this and ensured close working and consultation with deaf people throughout. Students sign in the films and BSL interviews were collected. BSL films and interviews needed work in the editing stage to ensure the hearing editor edited the signing correctly. *Can, Not Can’t* is a BSL film, described as *‘beautiful’* by one team member because BSL is used throughout and there is a positive message that deaf young people can do anything. The power of this could be extended by including more signing in the films.

Young people came together with their deaf peers to celebrate their deaf identities. The project Director reflects ‘filming and interviewing was an act of empowerment’ for them, providing space to learn, explore and celebrate deaf culture and history.

The project had high standards of inclusivity and accessibility throughout. BSL was used in classrooms, at the screening and in all films. Students and contributors were consulted on their communication styles.

Deaf history and heritage conclusion

More resources are available to research and understand Deaf history and heritage in Suffolk. New interviews with deaf people capture their experiences and life stories. The films present chronologies of the education system and opportunities for deaf children in Suffolk in the past. Historical research has been written up. The resources are deposited at Suffolk Archives and increase the number and diversity of deaf life stories in the archive, improving representation and future research opportunities.

4.4 Primary school engagement

It was enormously positive for the children to celebrate, share and develop their deaf identities, especially the role of BSL and what this means to them. (Teacher comment)

Two filmmaking workshops were delivered in primary schools as part of the legacy activities. Younger children came together with their deaf peers to create a short film.

Children shared *‘One thing I will tell someone’* and *‘What can I do now?’* feedback. The responses show that the children enjoyed taking part and had fun making and watching the films. Having the chance to sign with each other and on film in particular was mentioned in comments. They enjoyed explaining and showing their sign names. Children felt proud of taking part, and their confidence to have a go at something like speaking on camera. They recognised the development of their confidence over just a few sessions. For one child this was the confidence to sign at school when previously they had felt reluctant to. Another child said, *‘I felt proud of myself.’*

Teachers at both schools noticed how confident the children became as a result of taking part. Reluctant communicators came out of their shells and wanted to actively participate, taking on speaking and presenting roles. Responses note the significance of this for the children as they explore and celebrate their deaf identities. The workshops offered them new experiences and taking part gave them a 'platform to shine.' One child commented: *'I liked watching myself on the film. It made me feel happy.'*



Primary school students watching the film they had created

5. What worked well?

This project has worked because of your energy and commitment and focus and enthusiasm. It has been utterly shaped by you. Because this is the truth, all of you: you bring something new and fresh and unique to the world by being exactly who you are.

Evie Press, Deaf Perspectives Director

Deaf Perspectives: Past, Present and Future put young people at the centre of exploring and sharing deaf history and heritage. It brought deaf stories and experiences to life in real and engaging ways that were informative, sometimes funny and emotional. It empowered young people in their deaf identities, boosted the confidence of deaf and hearing young people in their abilities, to be who they are and to advocate for themselves and others. It gave them opportunities to make friends and ways to be sociable. The project was successful because of the care and commitment of the whole team at Offshoot, teams in the two schools, the contributors, supporters and the young people themselves.

The project delivered its approved purposes, and legacy projects extended the impact by working with more Suffolk schools, writing up the research more fully and interviewing more people. The outcomes presented in this report prove that Deaf history and heritage is better preserved, that young hearing and deaf students have benefited from taking part and that Offshoot is in a better place as an organisation, developing creative professionals and relationships in Suffolk.

5.1 Young people at the heart of the project

The films represent the messages the young people want to share and creating the films in this student-centred way makes the end results all the more powerful. Nothing went into the films without the approval of the young people. The students feel proud of what they have done and the professional quality of the films.

Being student centred meant meeting the students where they were in ability and knowledge. Some additional learning was needed around documentary making which was added in to the filmmaking skills sessions. Students experienced the historical research using the census to record information into the spreadsheet which stimulated some interesting conversations and reflections including from adults.

Working across two schools was difficult, especially as the schools are in different towns. Moving between them and scheduling time to work in them was difficult. Each student worked on two films and with different students in their group, students who might be from the other school. It would have been easier to assign students to groups, but the approach was more thoughtful and participatory. Co-ordinating which films each student would work on based on their own interest made it a genuine and empowering experience but was complicated administratively. The working groups and final films reflect the project ambition to bring

students together and give them a sense of community. The importance of student participation in the production process and student voice throughout was skilfully balanced with the quality of the end results. It is a credit to the belief and determination of the project team that realised quality films and genuine participation.

Student confidence and sense of achievement was improved. Students benefited through new friendships, skills, a willingness to try new things and to make mistakes but feel supported enough to try again. It was heartening to see how much the young people championed each other and made new friendships, in their own school and at the other school. Getting to know students at the other school was a highlight for many.

The students' willingness to embrace these opportunities, Offshoot and the school teams' skill and commitment to delivering these opportunities is to be congratulated.

5.2 The Offshoot approach

The team were aware that they are not expert in the stories they were telling and had the mindset to make sure the student voice came through strongly and authentically. Ensuring this meant taking decisions. On occasion the team felt they needed to give themselves permission to film without the students because the schedule could not work to include them in the process, at the university for example. Attention to this detail illustrates the intention behind the approach: this was about the young people learning and making films and being part of the whole process.

There were opportunities for reflection and praise of students during the process. The Offshoot team made sure to take those opportunities, celebrating the student's achievements with them and sharing what they noticed about the young people's skills and confidence as they developed. This attention to making the students feel safe and secure in what they were doing and valued for their contributions was essential to the quality of the final films and the overall success of the project.

Offshoot work with young creative professionals and give them properly paid opportunities to help them in their emerging careers. The young professionals on the Deaf Perspectives team have developed their practice, confidence and creativity because of this opportunity. People have learnt new skills, including learning some BSL and learning how to film and edit BSL. This strengthens Offshoot's work for the future and the creative sector generally by improving inclusive practice of the workforce.

5.3 Sharing the learning

People were committed to the success of the project and support from teachers, contributors and community supporters has been valuable. The project formed a diverse group of supporters, from people with a public profile such as photographer Stephen Iliffe and BSL campaigner Daniel Jillings to retired Teacher of the Deaf Alison Berry, GCSE and university students. This will help to spread the outcomes of the project more widely.

Linking the two schools through the project resulted in offers of assistance and support between them that will be beneficial for staff development and students in both schools. Teams are keen to explore future working together. The project also raised the profile of the deaf students and their teachers in their schools.

6. Thoughts for the future

Thoughts for the future are made here to build upon the success of Deaf Perspectives: Past, Present and Future and to share the success more widely.

- The Offshoot Foundation is in a better position to plan and deliver similar projects because of Deaf Perspectives. A model of consultation with young people and their teachers at the beginning of future projects will aid programme planning, for example, around skills and understanding of documentaries. Offshoot are aware of the planning needed to work within a secondary school day and the lead in times required to make filming and organising trips possible. In this case Northgate School need six school weeks advance notice to facilitate trips (this is roughly half a terms notice). The experience of needing to maximise filming opportunities in school and on trips, particularly when students are interviewing will be helpful for future projects.

Some practical matters were reflected in the project feedback. At times, the creative team could have been bigger to maintain the learning opportunities with the equipment. Having one person able to teach the students alongside observing the work in action could be a useful approach to all the parts of the process. An extra person could direct and embed students learning more and the role could perhaps be linked to the AQA qualification sign off process. This could help the skills development of individual students keen to learn more in certain areas and support learning in some of the areas students felt less confident in, for example, scripting, documentary and research.

Communicating across multiple schools and scheduling a programme of filming, interviewing and visits, as well as delivering the wider scope of the project needed the careful management of the project co-ordinator. Maintaining that role will be important to future projects. Future projects can be designed with an awareness of the required roles of the whole team and the time assigned to them. It will be important to make sure professional fees are budgeted for in the planning process with a greater awareness internally of the practical requirements of managing larger grants and procurement of project roles.

- The films can continue to be shared. They were made available on an Offshoot stand at the Norfolk Deaf Festival in July 2025 and Festival organisers are interested in screening them in 2026. One film was shared by Eastern Angles Theatre Company at an event for their play about Daniel Jillings. Continuing to share the films at screenings and festivals publicly maintains the energy of the project and its legacy. Sharing the project research and other resources in articles, presentations and talks will be another outlet for the project.

- The project has created interest from staff at Deaf Resource Bases in Suffolk about how and where else the project could roll out. The films have started conversations with groups in Norfolk and there are plans to develop work in Essex. Can Offshoot continue to support this work and how could they be funded? Feedback reflects the potential and ambition for this: *Ultimately, I would say this project is a milestone for Deaf education and it should be incorporated in all schools with Deaf pupils around the UK.*