

DeafShul WORKING TO INCLUDE DEAF JEWS

I am D/deaf and for as long as I can remember I have been campaigning for accessibility and inclusion for D/deaf people.

I was delighted when Rabbi Rene Pfertzel (Maidenhead Synagogue) introduced me to BSL interpreter Vicki Ashmore (a member of Bromley Reform Synagogue) the founder of DeafShul with the view to me helping to make the project happen. The project aims to enable D/deaf Jews have access to every aspect of Jewish life from participating in services,

having their bat/bar mitzvah, attend cheder, get married, participate in education or train to be a rabbi! While our communities are committed to inclusion and have good intentions however the reality is the access needs of D/deaf people are always sidelined for another day. Initially DeafShul will allow Deaf

people access to an interpreter and live captions during services. Using a Zoom account, a single laptop can be set up on a Bimah from any shul where a Deaf person might like to attend in person. Captions are switched on.

The Deaf person can be given or can bring along their own iPad; anything with access to Zoom. An interpreter can then 'zoom into' a meeting with the deaf person, who holds the iPad and can access the service in real

time. We will not be limited to the Deaf person attending in person. ANY Deaf person can request the link to join the service on Zoom. They will see the Rabbi who is visible from the laptop on the Bimah and see the interpreter signing in a separate box. Captions need only be turned on. An extra bonus – an online

Jewish community will develop naturally as regular attendees meet. The first DeafShul monthly Friday Night service took place on the 4th of April. The service came from Maidenhead Synagogue and was led by Rabbi Rene in his usual relaxed, friendly and warm style. and Y.L.J.C's Pete Simms the host kept us cool, calm and collected! DeafShul had its second erev-Shabbat service

on 2nd May led by Rabbi Rebecca Birk and Finchley Progressive Synagogue who did us proud! The singing was quite lovely, and Rabbi Rebecca welcomed DeafShul warmly. Our next DeafShul will be led by Rabbi Lea Muhlstein at the Ark Synagogue this will be followed by an incredibly special joint LGBTQ+ PRIDE & D/deaf PRIDE celebration at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue (St John's Wood) led by Rabbi Alexandra Wright and coordinated by LJ chair Karen Newman! Coming up after that DeafShul will be led by Rabbi Richard Jacobi at East London & Essex Liberal Community followed by Rabbi Danny Rich at Southgate Progressive Community in September! We would love to have a DeafShul service led by our wonderful Rabbi Elisheva after the High Holy Days, we know it would be special. Everyone is welcome to attend DeafShul services for information e-mail us at deaf.shul@gmail.com



OWEN POWER Photos 1) Rabbi Rene, 2) Rabbi Rebecca, 3) Vicki Ashmore