

European Friendship Week 2019

**St Johns School, Boston Spa, Wetherby, Leeds LS23 6DF
Sunday 21st July – Saturday 27th July 2019**

'The week has given all of the children confidence and improves their self esteem. The positive mood is infectious and has long lasting benefits'

Robert Mandara (Vice President Euro CI Users and EFW volunteer 2019)

'The input that all the leaders were putting in to these youngsters was impressive and encouraging. I think that our children really got the message that they are important and valued people who can have a lot to give to any community despite their hearing loss.'

'After EFW, they are so happy, they 'have wings'. They believe in themselves.'



The Ear Foundation®

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Background

2019 was the 9th year of European Friendship Week, run by The Ear Foundation with support and engagement from The European Association of Cochlear Implant Users.

Leadership is provided by The Ear Foundation and its team of skilled volunteers in collaboration with the European Country delegation leaders. The leadership ethos includes adults with hearing loss, family members and professionals. This brings an invaluable breadth of insights and commitment to the event which is one of its huge strengths.



This year saw the largest attendance yet (see below) and we reached capacity for the venue. Those attending are fluent in their first language and often have established English or are interested in improving their English skills. Those attending from the UK are interested in cultural diversity and global perspectives.

Participants

2019	Number of Young People	Number of Leaders
Belgium	4	1
Czech Republic	4	1
Estonia	4	2
Finland	2	2
Germany	7	2
Italy	4	1
Norway	4	1
Romania	6	1
UK Girls	8	7
UK Boys	6	7
TOTAL	49	25

2019	Leaders Hearing		Leaders with a hearing loss	Total
	Professional	Family		
UK Leaders	3	0	11	
European Leaders	1	7	3	
TOTAL	11		14	

Year	Austria	Belgium	Czech	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	Germany	Hungary	Italy	Norway	Romania	Spain	Turkey	UK	TOTAL
2011		3				4				3			3	6	19
2012	4					6	4			5				14	33
2013						4	2			4		4		13	27
2014				4		4	6			2		4	3	8	31
2015				6		5	4	4		3		6	4	8	40
2016				6		4	5	3				5	4	12	39
2017				6	3	6	5		5		4	4		10	43
2018				6	4	4	6		5		5			11	41
2019		4	4		4	2	7		4	4	6			14	49

Review of Objectives

The young people who attend are often future leaders of their cochlear implant communities. The aim is that they learn about themselves, about others and about our communities. In order to achieve this European Friendship Week (EFW) states and reviews specific objectives.

- **To have lots of fun and make new friends**

A strong and recurrent theme when receiving feedback about EFW is the fantastic friendships made within delegation groups and across countries which are life changing.

'All our children made new friends and were delighted to attend the camp. I think this summer exceeded all the expectations' Estonia

'They were able to make new friends and acquaintances among people who can really understand them and their life as deaf young people' Finland



'The take aways for the youths attending were many and most of all they enjoyed a well organized and fun week' Norway

'It was a wonderful experience to observe how well the team of leaders were able to take care of each and every one of the youths. A truly inclusive environment where all felt seen and met as individuals, me as a team leader included.' Norway

'Child X has a good friend in England, who she met in the camp EFW 2018'

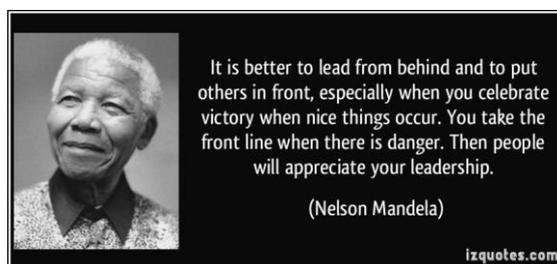
This is of benefit to the leaders as well

'Personal contacts are precious! EFW helps not only children but also adults to meet and find new and old friends, share ideas and experiences.'

- **To develop Team Working and learn Leadership Skills**

Leadership is about working together, about drawing people in and about advocating for yourself and others.

This is promoted, demonstrated and experienced throughout EFW.



All the activities at EFW require children to work in groups both large and small. Sometimes they are in their own country delegation and at other times they are in 'mixed groups' so facilitating friendship making and English speaking. When in a new environment surrounded by others who are always supportive and encouraging, it is much easier to step out of your comfort zone and to try, do, attempt, and consider new or different things.

'They lost fear. They started to be more confident, they open and shared their fears and worries, they learn how to walk from their comfort zone and that the other side is not scary.' Czechoslovakia

'They changed as young people – They learn lots of new things – they get to know others people from different countries. They will grow up and become young adults and be more independent in the future.' UK (deaf leader)

EFW gives young people an 'experience of caring and responsible grown ups'.

'The positive attitude of all the leaders, always encouraging the kids, the flexibility in changing plans and dealing with problems, the implementation of activities which are really useful to help kids mix up.'

The presentations are a fantastic way of developing confidence and experience speaking publicly in front of others. Many children and leaders comment upon this. They are often nervous beforehand but very proud of themselves afterwards.



‘One of our boys, who is not good at English and has never ever before had a chance to perform in front of his classmates or any other audience, was absolutely thrilled after our presentation - we all were happy. His eyes were shining during all the EFW week. In all the pictures I have taken of him, he is always broad smiling’. Estonia

‘Even our shy and somewhat reserved youngsters said at the end of the camp that they would love to come again someday, perhaps as young leaders?’ Finland

The young deaf adults are active role models of leadership. At 2019 there were 36 leaders 25 of whom were deaf themselves wearing hearing technology. Of the 11 hearing leaders there were 6 parents/family members and 4 professionals. This core balance reflecting deaf people leading is unique. It creates an atmosphere in which our young CI wearers who are the future leaders of our CI communities and see that deafness is not a barrier to leadership roles. This year the Vice president of Euro CI Users spoke with the group and encouraged them to take their place in the cochlear implant community advocating for themselves and for others.



For the first time we had a young leader attend The Ear Foundation leadership training course from Europe. (Germany).

‘It was a new experience and they supported me. The long days with theory and learning sessions were mixed with outdoor adventure activities. I learned lots about how to be a leader and what kind of leader I want to be. It really challenged me to think further and to grow myself as a person. It’s brilliant, a completely different culture and a wonderful experience. It makes you strong and you feel more confident.’

- To practice speaking English and find out about other cultures and European countries.

Young people have stronger self-identities if they know who they are and how they are both similar to, and different from others. It's about understanding and valuing others as individuals, communities and cultures.



3 friends from 3 different countries!

'It's good to know they are not alone, there's many like you, having the same problems and same challenges.'

'It is important for young CI users to realise there are other similar people around Europe and this world. In the long term, by knowing how things work in other countries, improvements will come to each'

Robert Mandara Vice President Euro CI users, Adult CI wearer.

EFW promotes cultural exchange with active opportunities to speak English.

'They got a lot of intercultural experience communicating with so many people from different countries. The country presentations were wonderful helpers in getting to know people and their countries.' Finland

'They share opinions and experiences with people from other countries. They can visit new places and learn about English culture' Italy



'It was wonderful English language practice for our youth who are beginning their upper secondary school and need to really immerse themselves into the English language as part of their studies' Finland

'Learning foreign languages is often challenging for those with hearing disabilities, getting a chance to practise English is great support for those young with hearing challenges.'



'It's important for kids with CI to feel in safe environment and – this event is safe for them. As they are struggle in foreign language this is perfect place to lose fear and get confident.'

- **To go on offsite trips and participate in onsite activities.**

EFW is organised by The Ear Foundation team. There is a mix of on and off site activities all of which have an English experience associated with them including the food!

In 2019 we:

- Walked in the stunning Yorkshire dales to a historic abbey
- Rode on a Steam train
- Visited a genuine cricket match joining a crowd of 18,000 fans.
- Participated in a Marks and Spencer's chocolate pudding and ice cream making workshop
- Joined the Leeds art gallery for a creative workshop.
- Visited one of the great historic houses, Harewood House
- Challenged ourselves at an intercountry pub quiz
- Played basket ball
- Enjoyed the EFW Great Bake of challenge
- Had a Harry Potter theme night incorporating a game of Quidditch, a Harry Potter video quiz and a broom making competition.



'The program that EFW offered was very interesting and varied. The cultural experiences arraying from a genuine cricket match to a beautiful hike in the Yorkshire dales were all things that will stick to our minds for life.' Finland

- **To grow in personal understanding of themselves and their identity as a young person with a hearing loss.**

At EFW those with hearing loss are in the majority. This provides a unique opportunity for children who are effectively using their cochlear implants to join together and share their ideas, issues and worries.

There was a focus on stories from our past and the stories we create today during EFW. The young people had an opportunity to share stories and support others. This sense of 'togetherness' brings openness and support.



'In their schools the young people do not have anybody to share what they feel, how difficult it is for them to attempt lessons sometimes, as nobody really cares.'

'I think this experience is very important for kids because they can meet people with the same difficulties they can share ideas, face new challenges and socialise with kids from all over Europe.'

'The girls from Holland and Belgium acted as if it was quite normal to be in an environment where the majority uses CI. As being part of a minority I felt sometimes a little bit strange. It gave the possibility to contemplate and think things over another way than usual. I therefore would highly recommended parents and teachers of regular schools to attend the EFW.' Belgium/Netherlands

'They got many practical tips on their CI usage, things like aqua pack for their CIs and how to get the swelling down from around your BAHA screw etc.' Finland

'They get to know more about cochlear implant technology in other countries' Italy

'They learned to know other youths and cultures, and there is no doubt that this exciting experience also developed their self-awareness and self-confident as CI users.' Norway

'EFW gives the kids a unique and valuable opportunity to learn about themselves and other CI users.' Norway

Both leaders and the young people themselves enjoyed the feeling of peer support, seeing other people face the same situations, problems and experiences; empowerment from having a week where using a CI is the 'new normal'.

'Children share their experiences of being deaf with other children, some for the first time. They talk about the challenges they face. They learn that they are not on their own and this gives them courage and confidence to overcome the barriers they face. Ofsted OUTSTANDING 2019



- **To build personal qualities, which are transferrable into leadership, further education and business through The Ear Foundation and Imagine If Assets for Success Framework.**

The 2019 EFW learning theme was Emotions. We focussed upon identifying our own emotions and interpreting others emotions. We thought about the emotions which help us to concentrate and learn and those which help us to work together as teams both leading and supporting. We had great fun experiencing lots of different ways of relaxing and giving ourselves strategies to promote calm thinking when we might be feeling otherwise.



‘The weeks given all of the children confidence and improves their self esteem. The positive mood is infectious and has long lasting benefits.’

The input that all the leaders were putting in to these youngsters was impressive and encouraging. I think that our children really got the message that they are important and valued people who can have a lot to give to any community despite their hearing loss.



Just a few examples of the 12 Assets developing during EFW:

- Consideration:** Working together, travelling to another country and to support each other while away from home.
- Problem Solving** A session of activities focussing upon Brain challenges
- Communication** Practising thinking and speaking in English.
- Resilience** Physical: Our expedition walk day.
Emotional: being away from family in a different country
- Curiosity** Leeds Art Gallery workshop. Finding out about different cultures
- Leadership** Country presentations
- Friendliness** Making new friends and build upon old friendships
- Collaboration** Harry Potter theme night: Quidditch, Broom Making
- Confidence** Presentations, trying new food, making friends, taking a full part in EFW
‘They become more confident in themselves’ Italy
- Flexibility** Mixing groups, meeting new people, have so many different experiences
- Innovation** Marks and Spencer Chocolate Pudding workshop, designing your own pudding.
- Independence** Travelling to EFW, managing hearing technology



Leaders told us about what has changed with their young people as a consequence of attending EFW 2019

- Speaking English

They now feel more confident in speaking English, they have friends with other kids,

They improved their social skills being engaged in conversations with other kids and leaders.

Child X has become more confident speaking English



- Friendships

More confident in making new friends and got new ideas.

Bonding with new people

Having new relations more easily

More confidence, they have made new friends.

- Thriving

Experiencing how one should always respect and be gracious about other people

They learn here they do not have to be perfect. They can make mistakes and thrive.

They had so much fun teaching each other their specific language. – 'Its about being different and still being the same'

They feel they are heard more.

One girl told so much about her life in school that she had never told before, after the weeks spent (at EFW) she was brave and confident, a new another girl.

Carrying with them a positive memory for life

After the camp, they are so happy, they 'have wings'. They believe in themselves.

And final thoughts about EFW 2019?

It brings the deaf community together, making friends.

Get to know about the UK and other European countries

Practising and becoming more confident, better in English

Experiencing caring and responsible grown ups

The positive and flexible child centred attitude of all the leaders.

Learn about themselves through others.

It's good to know they are not alone, there's many like you, having the same problems and same challenges.

Meeting other CI users

A great planned week with lots and lots of great activities!



The Ear Foundation Outdoor Activity Challenge weeks, including European Friendship Week are officially OUTSTANDING!

The UK government inspects residential events every year.

In 2019, The Ear Foundation were given the top rating of 'Outstanding' in all the 3 areas inspected.

It is fantastic that the individual care and high quality events provided by The Ear Foundation have been officially recognised by the UK government.



European Friendship Week 2020 Sunday 19th July – Saturday 25th July 2020

If you are interested in attending please contact Rachel@earfoundation.org.uk for further details.

M. Clare Allen

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Our special thanks go to:

EURO CI Users

European Friendship Week is run by The Ear Foundation with support from The European Association of Cochlear Implant Users. We would like to thank them for their support publicising and advocating for the event to its member countries and for the grant towards costs.

'We are very grateful to EURO-CIU and Ear Foundation for supporting EFW, a dream camp for our children!' European country leader

Ovingdean Hall Foundation

The Ear Foundation would like to thank The Ovingdean Hall Foundation who gave a grant towards the Deaf Young Leaders Training Course which has been a life transforming experience for themselves and for the children they have then mentored.