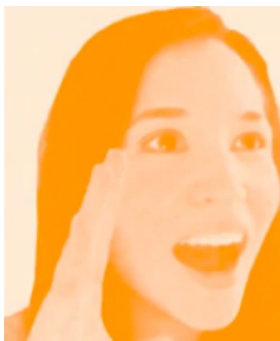




# IBES

Institute for a  
Broadband-Enabled Society



## *Hear Me Out!*

Enhancing social inclusion and wellbeing  
for deaf and hearing impaired teens through  
an online peer support program

# Hear Me Out!



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Broadband-Enabled Society



VCA  
Victorian College  
of the Arts



Department of Education and  
Early Childhood Development

inspiring young  
deaf people



<http://www.youtube.com/hearmeoutonline>

## November 2013

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## Executive Summary

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This white paper describes the outcomes of a project designed to examine the effectiveness of using broadband technologies to deliver a program promoting well-being and engagement amongst young deaf and hearing impaired adults.

The focus of the project was to combine two existing, successful “live” programs – *Let It Out!* and *Hear For You* into a virtual program, called *Hear Me Out*. The *Let It Out!* program is a train the trainer program in which young deaf adults were trained to apply actor vocal training techniques. *Hear For You* is a community based coaching and mentoring program for deaf and hearing impaired teenagers facilitated by deaf and hearing impaired young adults.

In addition to this development goal, the research aims of the project were:

- To determine to what extent the online environment of *Hear Me Out* promotes well-being, a sense of community and engagement amongst the deaf and hearing impaired young participants.
- To evaluate the use of broadband technologies as a means to build communities for people with a disability.

Together with the partner investigators, the *Hear For You* community program, the Australian Communication Exchange (ACE) and the support of the Victorian Deaf Education Institute (VDEI) learning technology centre, the project brought together a team with expertise in the performing arts, applied linguistics, virtual environments and e-learning, and deaf and hearing impaired education.

The project had five phases, the outcomes of which are summarised below.

### **Phase One: Selection of content for on-line delivery.**

Using an action research approach, participants from the *Let It Out!* And the *Hear For You* programs worked in collaboration to identify the most significant challenges that young hearing impaired adults face in social situations. Through creative development workshops the group chose applying for a job as a scenario that posed particular challenges in relation to their sense of well-being and confidence.

### **Phase Two: Rehearsal of material to transfer to virtual environments.**

The creative team developed a script based on the role plays from the workshops in Phase One.

### **Phase Three: Building the virtual environments.**

In collaboration with our Partner Organisation, ACE, the team created a series of storyboards, which were examined for narrative logic and content by the team and vocal trainers from *Let It Out* and mentors from *Hear For You* before being uploaded to a secure You Tube site. Concurrently, a recruitment drive through the *Hear for You* and Victorian Deaf Education Institute’s databases was conducted by the project manager.

## **Phase Four: Participation in on-line peer support programs and evaluation.**

This phase was conducted over four weeks during which time we were able to test the efficacy of the program from an end-user perspective using quantitative and qualitative approaches.

## **Phase Five: Live online workshop for remote participants.**

This final phase included a live online workshop at the Victorian Deaf Education Institute's closed broadband facilities with participants in remote locations.

## **Recommendations**

This white paper finds that the participants perceived the on-line modules to be beneficial, particularly in terms of providing tips and techniques for self-empowerment and building self-confidence through the vocal training and coaching and mentoring. The participants engaged enthusiastically with the content, identifying with the challenges portrayed in the program by the mentors and actors that hearing impaired young people can face.

However, we also found that the participants did not tend to utilise the web technologies to engage with the other hearing impaired participants in the program in the online environment.

This white paper recommends:

- Broadband technologies continue to be explored by educators of the deaf and hearing impaired as a means to deliver self empowerment programs to hearing impaired young people in remote settings.
- The program is delivered in closed settings such as schools and clinics which can provide a sustainable environment for the participants from week to week through a closed broadband facility and embedded programs.
- Scaling up and sustainability of the *Hear Me Out* program is assisted by recruitment through professionals who work with deaf teenagers. These professionals should lead the program with their students and clients.
- To enhance engagement of the participants in the online environment, chat rooms are added to the program so that the participants communicate online to the "Actors" from the videos and with each other.
- A hosted platform resourced by a team of young deaf people is established with ongoing technical support.
- That the *Hear Me Out* program includes both live and virtual components. This would need long term planning and resourcing and integrated into a specific curriculum or training program for young deaf people.
- Further funding is sought from commercial companies such as Google.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Social inclusion for hearing impaired and deaf young people

There are an estimated 20,000 Australians under the age of 21 years who are deaf or hearing impaired.<sup>1,2</sup> Children whose voice and speech quality can impact on how well they are understood by their listeners are at high risk of social isolation and are four times more likely to have a mental health disorder.<sup>3</sup> International studies investigating the mental health of deaf and hearing impaired children and adolescents suggest that the prevalence for mental health problems for this population is between 28% and 41%, with a higher incidence of psycho-social problems compared to hearing children and adolescents.<sup>4,5</sup> Social isolation and compromised academic performance are other challenges hearing faced by deaf and hearing-impaired young people.<sup>6</sup> In Australia, over 83% of deaf and hearing impaired children and adolescents attend mainstream schools, where they are often the sole student in their class or school who is deaf or hearing impaired.<sup>7</sup> These young people face attitudinal barriers in the workplace when they cannot communicate directly with other employees and employers,<sup>8</sup> a barrier that the vocal training component of *Hear Me Out* sought to address. Whilst current research indicates that education levels have improved for this group,<sup>9</sup> there are a substantial number of deaf and hearing impaired students leaving school with a lower level of education than their hearing peers. Collaborative partnerships between schools, organisations and professionals working with deaf and hearing impaired children and adolescents as well as independent and government agencies in the health, education and research sectors are needed to address these challenges<sup>10</sup>. From the perspective of deaf and hearing impaired teens, assistance is needed with finding opportunities to socialise with their peers.<sup>11</sup>

High-speed broadband has the capacity to enable the delivery of assistive technologies such as live video streaming and captioning in classrooms and homes, in order to support interventions for deaf and

<sup>1</sup> Baker E, Hogan A, Purcell A, Shipley M, Stazdins L. Communication and behavioural disorders among children with hearing loss increases risk of mental health disorders. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 2011; 25(4).

<sup>2</sup> Ching TYC, Oong R, van Wanrooy E. The ages of intervention in regions with and without universal newborn hearing screening and prevalence of childhood hearing impairment in Australia. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Audiology*. 2006;28(2):137.

<sup>3</sup> Fellinger J, Holzinger D, Beitel C, Laucht M, Goldberg D. The impact of language skills on mental health in teenagers with hearing impairments. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*. 2009;120(2):153-9.

<sup>4</sup> Van Gent T, Goedhart AW, Hindley PA, Treffers PDA. Prevalence and correlates of psychopathology in a sample of deaf adolescents. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. 2007;48(9):950-8.

<sup>5</sup> Eldik T, Treffers PDA, Veerman JW, Verhulst FC. Mental health problems of deaf Dutch children as indicated by parents' responses to the child behavior checklist. *American annals of the deaf*. 2004;148(5):390-5.

<sup>6</sup> Remine MD. *A preliminary investigation of the mental health of young deaf West Australians*. Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne; 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Power D, Hyde M. The characteristics and extent of participation of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in regular classes in Australian schools. *Journal of deaf studies and deaf education*. 2002;7(4):302-11.

<sup>8</sup> Winn S. Is there a link between hearing aid use, employment, and income? *Am Ann Deaf*. 2006 Fall;151(4):434-40.

<sup>9</sup> Willoughby L. Sign Language Users, Education and Employment Levels: Keeping Pace with Changes in the General Australian Population. *Journal of deaf studies and deaf education*. 2011;16(3):401-13.

<sup>10</sup> Above n 6.

<sup>11</sup> National Deaf Children's Society. *The Change Your World Consultation Report for 9-13 year olds*. 2012

hearing impaired people.<sup>12,13</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (of which Australia is a signatory) outlines the importance of access to new media technology for this population. The Australian government has identified the NBN and telecommunications as being important for the inclusion of people living with disability.<sup>14</sup> Research that examines the usability and accessibility of these technologies for hearing impaired people is urgently needed to foster the translation of these technologies for accessible practices.

## 1.2 Interventions to improve the well-being and social inclusion of hearing impaired teens

The *Hear Me Out* project built on expertise, programs, and relationships that commenced in 2006 with the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant project, *Vocal Empowerment and effective communication* (2006-2008 LP0669753). The findings demonstrated the psycho-social and physical benefits for the participants in the 10 week face-to-face actor vocal training program, including increased confidence using their voices in public spaces<sup>15</sup> and benefits to speech production.<sup>16</sup> A follow up program, *Let It Out!*, resulted in a highly successful and unique training program in which deaf and hearing impaired young people from the ARC study were trained to deliver speech skills and strategies to similarly impaired peers. In 2012, the *Let It Out!* program was integrated into two Melbourne schools with deaf units. An evaluation of the program was undertaken in November 2012 at one of these schools through a focus group with teachers, parents and deaf teen program participants. Comments from the focus group revealed significant psycho-social benefits including increased confidence speaking in public in and out of school, and increased participation in oral presentations and class discussions.

*Hear for You* is a registered charity specialising in mentoring programs for young people aged 11 – 18 who are deaf or hearing impaired. Program participants are taught methods to cope with everyday situations in the classroom and workplace in order to reduce the likelihood of them suffering mental health issues as a result of social isolation. This program is currently delivered by young adult deaf and hearing impaired mentors to young deaf and hearing impaired teens in a workshop format across Australia. Results of surveys conducted in 2011-2012 with the mentees and their parents show that 88% stated that there had been an improvement in skills, with increases in confidence and leadership skills most commonly noted.

Neither *Let It Out!* nor *Hear For You* have the human resources to support current demand for delivery of their programs. This pilot project (Aug 2012-Aug 2013), funded by the Institute for a Broadband Enabled Society, allowed the project team to build a prototype online module incorporating select

<sup>12</sup> Ellis K. It means inclusion: a creative approach to disability and telecommunications policy in Australia. *Telecommunications Journal of Australia*. 2012;62(2).

<sup>13</sup> Clark C. *Students with a Hearing Loss in VET in Australia: A Statistical Snapshot*. Support Document: National Centre for Vocational Education Research. 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. *Review of Access to Telecommunication Services by People with Disability, Older Australians and People Experiencing Illness*. 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Cook G. The joy of hearing and being heard: towards a vocal pedagogy for young people who use cochlear implants. *Voice and Speech Review*. 2009;6:378-88.

<sup>16</sup> Holt CM, Dowell RC. Actor Vocal Training for the Habilitation of Speech in Adolescent Users of Cochlear Implants. *Journal of deaf studies and deaf education*. 2011;16(1):140-51.

components of both programs to test the bundling of these elements with streaming and captioning technologies.

### 1.3 Project Aims

The aim of the project was to re-cast two 'live' programs, *Let It Out* and *Hear For You*, into a virtual form through broadband technology using an action research approach. The second aim was to evaluate the use of broadband technologies to facilitate interaction for building self-empowering communities in a creative and interactive way.

The overarching intention of *Hear Me Out!* was to reach more participants through on-line delivery than the current "live" programs with a particular emphasis on those living in rural regions. It was envisaged that a shift to a virtual environment would allow the possibility of building communities of young deaf people who could access peer-mentoring and coaching techniques for effective communication.

The program title, *Hear Me Out!*, was chosen by the group in the first creative development stage. It represents not only the linking of the names of the two live programs but also the need for young deaf people to "be heard" in a hearing world.

## 2 Developing the *Hear Me Out* online resource

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The over arching project design utilised reflective practice within an action research methodology and performative enquiry from the creative arts. These approaches ensured that the content and technology solutions were able to meet the communication needs of the deaf and hearing-impaired participants as well as the aims of the project and the project stakeholders.

The project had five phases:

1. Selection of content for on-line delivery
2. Rehearsal of material to transfer to virtual environment
3. Building the virtual environments (four online modules)
4. Participation in on-line peer support program (Hear Me Out) and evaluation
5. Live online workshop for remote participants

### 2.1 Data and analysis

For the evaluation component of the project we used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Google Analytics allowed for a quantitative overview of participant engagement with the online resource while a questionnaire sought to identify participants' perspectives of the website's functionality and content.

In addition, we used thematic analysis to examine the participant posts on the website. Prior to participants taking part in the online peer support program and evaluation, the research team discussed the design of the virtual environment with Partner Investigator, Australian Communication Exchange (ACE), whose expertise in developing assistive technologies included the video-captioning. As a comparison of face to face and remote access, we conducted a live video conference at the Victorian Deaf Education Institute which included a "mock interview" and vocal training exercises with participants in remote locations.

Another source of qualitative data were the video-recorded discussions of selection of content and rehearsals in phases one and two as well as the Hansard account of the live online workshop conducted at VDEI in phase 5. These data were analysed using Appraisal Analysis from applied linguistics to explore the affect dimension of how the young people narrated their experiences both in relation to past events as well as to the content of the modules (for example, feelings, personal impact); we also examined the nature of the interactions between the mentors and mentees. The discourse analytical research component of the project is ongoing and will be reported in conference presentations in 2014.

Human research ethics approval for this project was provided by the VCA Human Ethics Advisory Group and the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Melbourne (Project ID 1339570.2).

## 2.2 Participants and recruitment

The participants were primarily drawn from the *Hear For You* program and the Victorian Deaf Education Institute's databases and newsletters. Deaf Children Australia also advertised the program in their newsletter. Participants who identified as deaf oral people self-selected for the program.

Initially, the target group was to be drawn from Victoria but the slow response in the early stages led us to widening the recruitment drive to other states. The final number of participants was thirty-seven which included, one audiologist and two teachers of the deaf. These participants were included because they were keen to trial the program with their students in class. The research team felt that these participants could also provide insightful, professional feedback.

The Project Manager, Sophie Li, is deaf and is a mentor and the Manager for Victorian Programs for *Hear For You*. She was present at all activities that involved the deaf participants and provided constant feedback to the hearing research team on the needs of the non-hearing community. Her role also mitigated against any conflict of interest between the researchers and participants.



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- Thinking of getting a part time job or work experience?
- Want to find out more about job interviews, especially from a deaf oral person's point of view?
- Need some ideas and advice in how to explain to your interviewer about your hearing loss?

Hear For You is taking part in a research project with the University of Melbourne - called **Hear Me Out!** an online training program where young deaf oral mentors and vocal trainers share stories of how they managed in job interviews. They also provide valuable insight and advice for those who want to gain a job for the first time.

Year 7 to 12 students, young deaf oral people and professionals for the deaf in the state of Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales, ACT and Queensland are warmly invited to join this online program.

#### What do I do in the program?

You will be asked to participate in voice and presentation skills training, comment on advice and tips in the film and you are also welcome to share your experiences and ask questions. Essentially, we would love to know what you think of the idea of sharing this kind of online resources via Youtube.

Figure 1: Recruitment flyer for *Hear Me Out* published in *Hear For You* newsletter March 2013

## 2.3 Project activities

The personnel in *Hear Me Out* brought distinctive qualities to this research project. The cyclical nature of the phases of research and development were conceived as an action research methodology in which reflective practice by all participants was crucial to the iterative process of the project. The research design ensured that all stakeholders involved in *Hear Me Out* had the opportunity to contribute their expertise at each phase including the recruited participants, academics, community and educational organisations, and industry, ensuring that the integrity of the online program reflected the current ethos of the live programs through building and sustaining communities for the deaf and hearing impaired.

### 2.3.1 Project Design

#### 2.3.1.1 Phase One: Selection of content for online delivery

The focus of this phase was to identify suitable content from existing live programs to deliver in virtual environments, with input from the young adult mentors (*Hear For You* and *Let It Out!* programs) and the mentees from the *Hear For You* program. Three workshops were held in November and December 2012 which identified program content according to issues and concerns expressed by the two groups. This was the first time the two groups had met and their interactions provided “thick” description of the participants’ lived experiences and strategies for overcoming communication techniques drawn from community cultural development practices. The group decided that “job interviews” provided the most challenging situations for young hearing impaired adults and that this should be the focus of the on-line content. They were also keen to inform young hearing impaired adults about the new free assistive technologies available. A section entitled “Tech Talks” was included which demonstrated the new National Relay System for speaking on the phone through internet captioning; and caption telephoning via interpreter who types the telephone conversation and; Music Links, a device attached to cochlear implants and hearing aids which enhances listening to music.



Figure 2: Image from 'Tech Talks' episode

### 2.3.1.2 Phase Two: Rehearsal of material to transfer to virtual environments

The *Let It Out!* program focuses on using the voice for vocal empowerment in order to be heard in public speaking situations. It includes a focus on the common difficulties with speaking that have been determined by the *Let It Out* deaf vocal trainers, as well as modules exploring breath in relation to sound and speaking; phonation; resonance; expressivity and vocal empowerment; and active listening and communication techniques. The content from the *Hear For You* program emphasises self-empowerment through peer-group coaching and mentoring and includes themes of teamwork, identity, leadership, communication, careers, education, relationships and well-being. The content from both programs was integrated into a script which was filmed using one hearing impaired member of the *Let It Out* team, one hearing impaired member from *Hear For You* and one hearing impaired member from both programs who played the part of the job interviewee. The role of the interviewer was played by a hearing actor. Contribution to the script was provided by a videographer, a theatre director and a member of the project team who is hearing impaired. This team then rehearsed the script which allowed for practice and evaluation of content in preparation for transferring the live content to virtual forms. Interviews of the mentors' experiences of their first job interview were filmed to provide 'real-life' experiences for the participants.

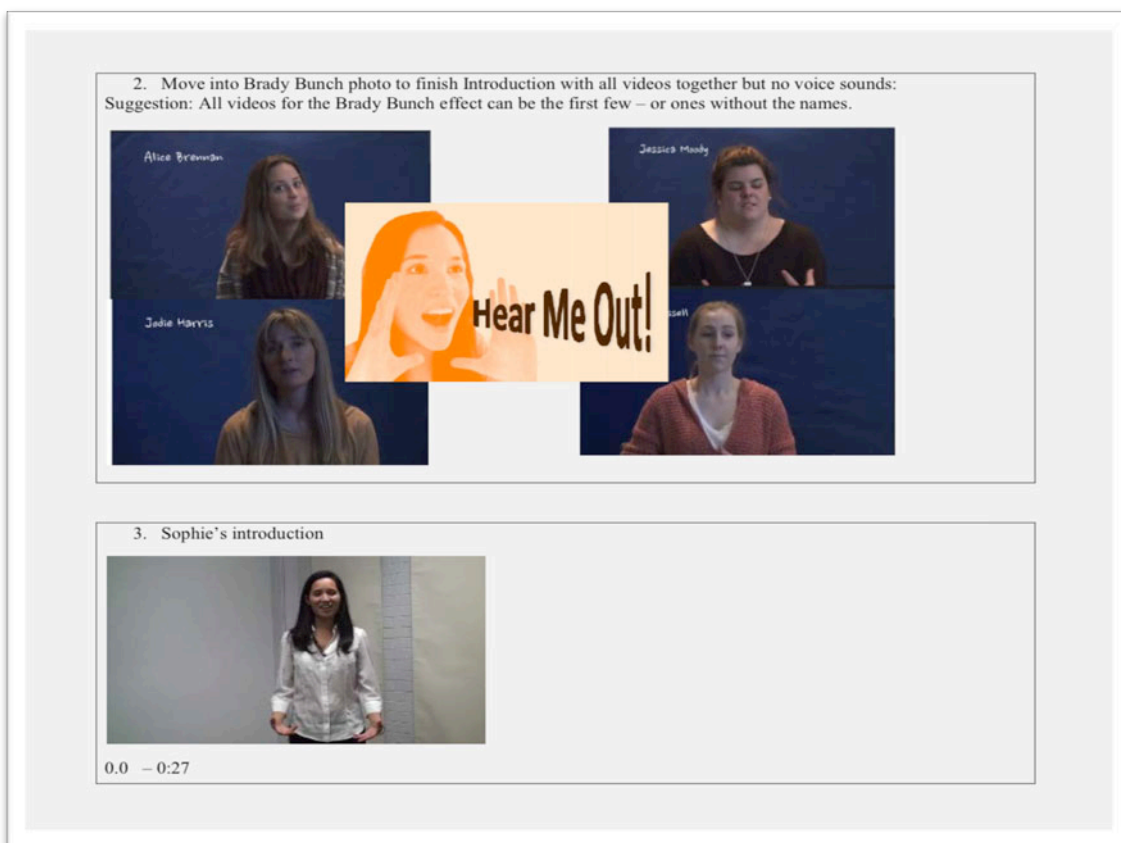


Figure 3: Storyboard preparation for phase 2 - developing content

### *2.3.1.3 Phase Three: Building the virtual environments*

ACE provided project management of the integration of content and digital resources while e-learning guidance was provided by Learning Management Systems (University of Melbourne) in relation to synchronous and asynchronous on-line learning activities. ACE suggested using You Tube as a platform to deliver the video content online as a captioning facility is provided within this program. Furthermore, You Tube was considered to be a platform that young people were familiar with and would be able to access easily.

### *2.3.1.4 Phase Four: Participation in online peer support programs and evaluation*

In this phase, we delivered and tested the efficacy of the online programs. The modules were released each week and participants were able to review the work during the week. There was opportunity to pause and resume each part of the week's video. The project manager moderated postings to the You Tube channel and provided troubleshooting assistance throughout the period when the online programs were released.

This phase included the evaluation of the modules and the online delivery by the participants. We conducted our evaluation via a questionnaire delivered via a survey monkey. Furthermore, Google Analytics was used to monitor user traffic throughout the training period. We also stored the posts to the You Tube panel for thematic analysis of content.

### 2.3.1.5 Phase five: Live workshop at the Victorian Deaf Education Institute with participants in remote locations

The focus of this phase was to enable all four online modules to be delivered through the closed broadband network facilities provided by VDEI which provided a more secure and controlled environment for internet connection with the participants. The delivery of the live workshop via the closed facility also allowed participants to compare their experiences when accessing the videos independently with live interaction with the *Hear Me Out* team. Captioning and a stenographer were provided by ACE which enabled a verbatim record to be captured and evaluated.

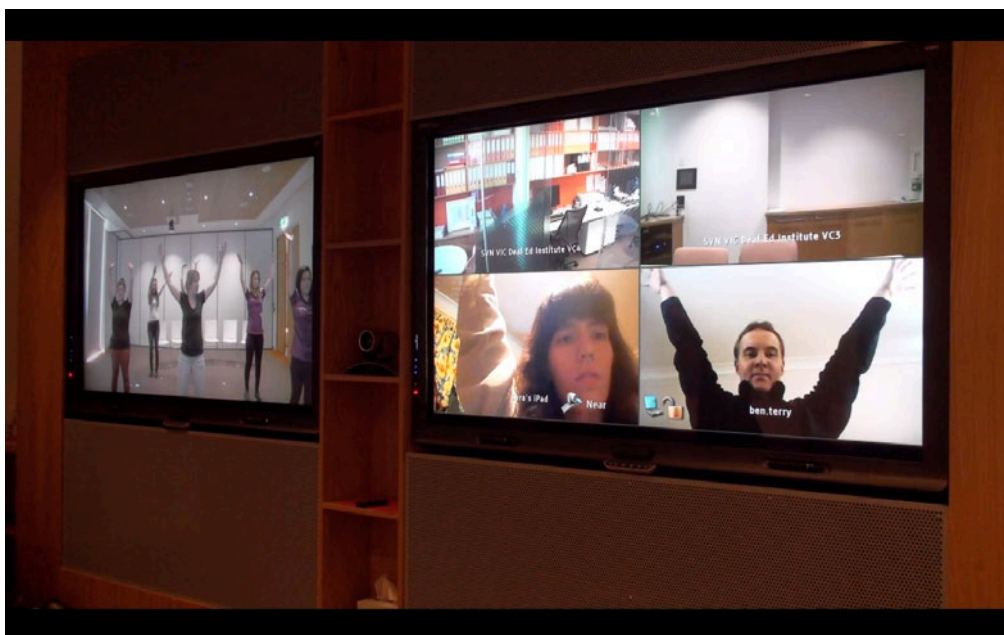


Figure 4: Images from the VEDI live workshop with remote face to face and remote participants

## 3 Outcomes

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The major outcome of this project is the development and successful delivery of four *Hear Me Out* online modules. The modules were uploaded to a You Tube website weekly. For access to this website please contact Chief Investigator Cook.

### 3.1 Online modules

Public The on-line content comprised a job interview scenario, “tech talks” (practical demonstration of assistive technologies), coaching tips, vocal training techniques and online posting to the Project Administrator, Sophie Li, from the participants.

The online content consisted of four modules:

- Welcome to *Hear Me Out!*
- Being Heard,
- Being Clear and Positive, and
- Practice Makes Perfect.

The module theme was ‘going for a job’. The module content identified the challenges a hearing impaired interviewee faced in an interview, then showed communication strategies to mitigate these challenges. Participants were encouraged to practise the communication strategies and supporting vocal exercises while viewing the module, then provide their feedback online.

We structured the modules on a video of a good job interview contrasted with the same interview scenario performed less well. Participants viewed the good interview, which showed the interviewee effectively adopting the tips and techniques from the on-line training. Participants also viewed the ‘bad’ interview in which the interviewee was unsure of herself and faced challenges and dilemmas due to her hearing impairment. Our hearing impaired project team members dubbed these challenging moments in the bad interview as ‘meltdowns’. In the meltdowns, the unfolding of the interview is interrupted, and the *Let It Out* and *Hear For You* “angels” appear at the side of the interviewer with advice, which the interviewer is not privy to. The video then cuts to the vocal training and the coaching and mentoring tips to help the interviewee during the “meltdowns”. Throughout the modules, participants have opportunities to reflect on their own experiences, participate in the vocal activities, and give feedback online on their own performances and seek advice from other participants or the moderator. The modules were delivered over a four week period.

### 3.2 Module outlines

These projects are completely funded by municipal or state governments, and hence by the public. Cultural institutions such as the State Library of Victoria and Federation Square fit this model. Certain cities, such as Dandenong, Adelaide, and Wollongong, rely on state government partnerships or grants to establish Wi-Fi. When cities fail to win grants Wi-Fi projects can be stalled indefinitely.

### 3.2.1 Module One: *Hear Me Out!* and Tech Talks (length of module 22:26)

This module introduces Sophie Li as the narrator and contact person for the participants. Sophie was responsible for monitoring responses and setting up the Google accounts and passwords for participants. She introduces the narrative of the job scenario and appears during the module to link participants to each new section of the online training. The first section of this module introduces the “actors” who the participants will see throughout the four modules. They tell stories of their first job interview. Then we move straight to the job interview where participants see Jess face a series of challenges e.g. not being able to hear the interviewer, an obstacle is in the way, how to reveal that she is hard of hearing and the best way to contact her on the outcome of her interview. As previously mentioned, we included two “angels” from *Let It Out!* and *Hear for You* who guide Jess through her meltdowns when she faces challenges in the interview. These angels link us to the coaching tips and the vocal training throughout each module.



Figure 5: Alice, one of the Hear for You mentors

The *Let It Out!* vocal training component focuses on preparing for an interview through a series of physical exercises which include stretching, releasing and breathing so that the participant practises an open stance and presence.

Each module also had a weekly challenge as outlined below and these challenges were used as title links so that participants could review the material at any time during the video or during the week.

### 3.2.2 Module Two: Being Heard (length of module 21:52)

#### Challenge: Dealing with Obstacles and Describing Yourself

This module provides the participants with coaching tips on how to successfully be heard in an interview through providing vocal exercises on breathing and phonation. Participants are given the opportunity to review Jess's challenges and Sophie appears to guide them through some practice sentences on how to ask the interviewer to repeat a question or remove an obstacle. We called this section "Sophie's Challenge" and it is repeated each week. For example, how the participants would respond to questions like: "tell me about yourself". In the case of Jess's scenario, she was faced with being heard in an interview and asking the interviewer to remove an obstacle or re-arrange the seating so that she can see his face or being asked a challenging, open-ended question. The mentors also provide tips on how best to describe your attributes at an interview. We also ensured that whoever led the vocal training was the person who described their experience of a job interview. These were longer sections and picked up from the first introduction of stories and anecdotes in week one.



Figure 6: Jess, Mentor

### 3.2.3 Module Three: Being Clear and Positive (length of module 17:14)

#### Challenge: Cannot Lip Read You – Being Assertive

The *Let It Out!* vocal training included resonance for having a stronger voice and practice of vowels and consonants. All the exercises are very physical and require the participant to physically engage with the exercises. The leaders use their whole bodies and ask the participants to stand up and clear a space for the work. We also included links which read "review this exercise again". The practice sentence for the third week was "Tell me about your biggest challenge and how you overcame it" which is one of the questions the interviewer poses to Jess in her interview.

3.2.4 Module Four: Practice Makes Perfect (length of module 24:25)

Challenge: Cannot Lip Read You – Being Assertive



Figure 7: Jodie, Mentor

This module brings all the work together and involves the participants seeing the “good interview” all the way through as Jess puts into practice all that she has learnt from her “good angels”. The good angels appear again and this time when she has a meltdown they remind her of her training and we see Jess immediately put this into practice.

Finally, the whole team perform a poem called the “Grip Top Sock” which includes very difficult articulation of sounds.

3.3 Successful Court Completion

Thirty-eight participants completed the 4 week course. Table 1 provides an overview of participant characteristics.

State	Males	Females	Occupation
Victoria	4	4	School Age
	2	5	University
	2	3	Work
		6	Teacher of the Deaf
		3	Audiologist
Tasmania	1		Teacher of the Deaf
New South Wales		3	School Age
		1	University
		1	Work
Queensland		1	School Age
Australian Capital Territory		2	Work

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

### 3.4 Development and Implementation Challenges

Initially discussions with our Industry Partner, ACE confirmed that a hosted website would be the best option for access for the participants. However, we finally decided that uploading the videos onto a You Tube site would be more effective as young people are used to accessing You Tube.

In hindsight, this decision caused a considerable amount of frustration for the Project Manager who maintained the site and the participants. Whilst the You Tube was considered a “user friendly” and familiar environment for participants, it proved very cumbersome to establish and to enrol participants because for ethics reasons we had to ensure that the privacy settings were established. Some participants found the link from Google+ to You Tube fairly straightforward and others found it very cumbersome. One unfortunate feature we did not anticipate was the unavailability of You Tube channels in schools which meant that the teachers of the deaf were unable to use it directly with their students in the classroom.

The video conferencing at the live workshop was effective for the coaching and mentoring part of the workshop but not for the vocal training. The participants could hear the sounds but the vocal trainers could not hear the responses from the participants. The vocal training also relies upon nuanced diagnostic feedback from trainer to participant and this was not possible with the audio feedback mechanism whereby there was a delay in transmission from the output at the VDEI to the participants’ laptops.

## 4 Evaluation

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The aim of this project was to recast two successful 'live' programs that fostered self-development for hearing impaired young people into a virtual online form using broadband technologies. The online format needed to take into account the unique aural, visual, learning and social needs of the participants. Essentially, our evaluation focussed on "does it work?" and we adopted qualitative and quantitative methods to explore this question.

The data that informed this evaluation are participant responses to a survey monkey questionnaire delivered post course, the online posts from the participants to the *Hear Me Out* site, and Google Analytics data from the site. Further, performative enquiry, a methodology from the creative arts, was adopted throughout the project in order to provide a process evaluation perspective of the action research approach to the project.

### 4.1 Participants and participant engagement: a quantitative view

Two of the participants were educators of the deaf and hearing-impaired who wished to incorporate the material into their own teaching. The course was delivered in September. Figure 8 from a Google Analytics report provides an overview of user activity during the course delivery. The analytics show that the introductory module, *Welcome to Hear Me Out!* received the most views and received repeated viewing throughout the four week period of the course. The second module, *Being Heard*, released in Week 2, was the second most popular module, and the analytics suggest that users likewise revisited this module but to a lesser extent. Modules three and four, also on timed release, received less views; the number of views for these modules suggest that all participants logged into the module, yet they may not have viewed the module in its entirety.

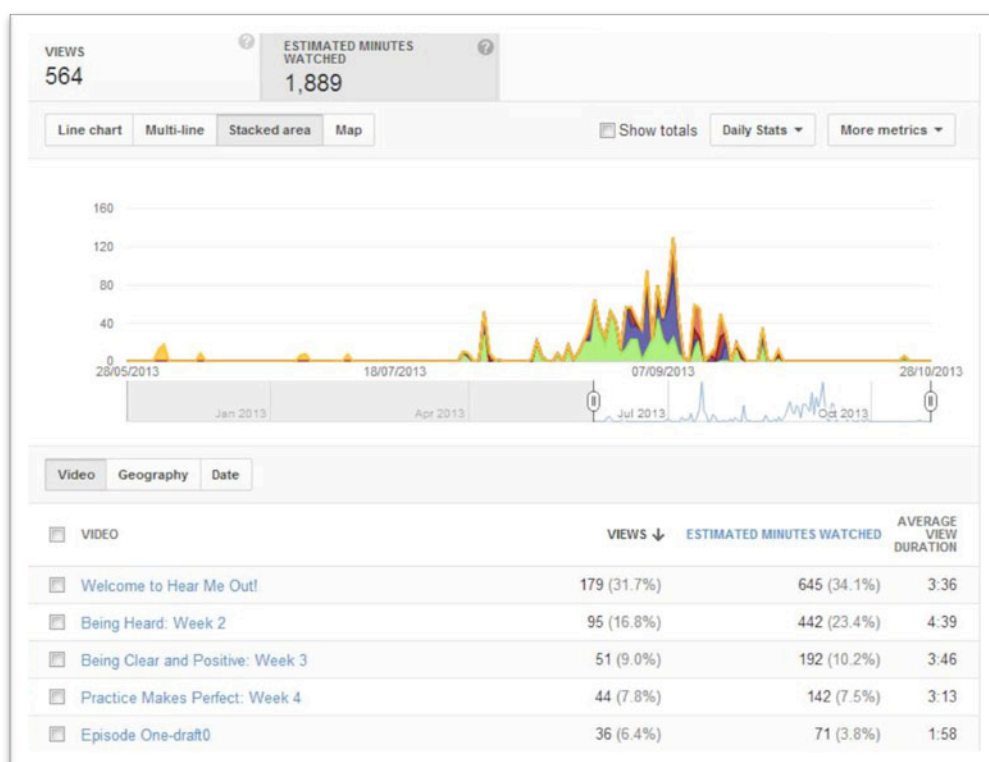


Figure 8: Participation report from Google Analytics for Hear Me Out timed release modules

## 4.2 Usability and content evaluation

The survey monkey questionnaire sought participants' free text responses on their interactions with the website (4 questions), and on the website content (6 questions). Twenty-eight of the 37 participants in the Hear Me Out program provided responses to the survey. The respondents provided answers to all the questions.

### 4.2.1 Website usability

#### 4.2.1.1 Question 1: were you able to locate the website easily through your home broadband network? Which device did you use?

The majority of respondents reported ease of access to the website, while some (4) reported some initial difficulty using Google plus:

*It was hard to get my head around youtube using the Google+ etc. Once I got that – sweet!*

Firewalls at one school prevented one participant accessing the resource from school while another participant was able to access the site from a school computer. Participants reported using laptops, iPads and desktop computers connected to the home broadband network. A few participants (3) reported using wi-fi and one participant using an iPhone.

#### 4.2.1.2 Question 2: Once you were on the website, were the instructions on how to progress through the videos easy to follow?

The majority of respondents reported that the navigation instructions were easy to follow, e.g. “everything was fine”. Two respondents linked their feedback on the instructions about navigation as well as feedback on instructions for the vocal exercises:

*...I needed to be in a larger room for some of the activities.*

*...Pip was going a much more complex exercise and was doing at fast pace which I found difficult to follow, and I couldn't tell when she was going from softest to loudest it sounded pretty much the same level. All need to cue a bit better when they are doing it and when we as audience are to do it. There were a few inconsistencies there. Overall, I felt they were actually doing it live and that helped my motivation to follow.*

#### 4.2.1.3 Question 3: Did you find the links worked well? How could they be improved?

Most respondents reported that the links worked well - “No hassles”.

#### 4.2.1.4 Question 4: How much did you use the captioning?

Half of the respondents reported using the captioning all or most of the time, and reported positively on the quality of the captions.

*I used the captions as well as audio so that I did not miss out on important information.*

Those who didn't use the captioning reported not needing it.

### 4.2.2 Content evaluation

#### 4.2.2.1 Question 5: Were the “coaching tips” useful? Which ones in particular?

The majority of respondents commented that the tips were useful or quite useful. They commented positively on the coaching tips for communicating pro-actively in the interview and whether and how to disclose a hearing impairment to a potential employee. For example:

*I liked the tips...about what to do in a job interview situation to advocate for your rights.*

*All good, inspiring confidence*

*Reassurance from personal experience*

#### 4.2.2.2 Question 6: Where the “vocal training tips” useful? Which ones in particular?

Participants responded positively to the vocal training tips; however some participants were undecided in their responses, commenting for example “not sure” and others responded that they thought the vocal training exercises were “a bit out of place”. One responded commented on the constraints of doing the vocal exercises late at night as well as the mechanics of watching the video and listening while making noise at the same time.

#### 4.2.2.3 Question 7: Have you used any of the vocal tips from the coaching and vocal training in a real-life interview?

All respondents replied positively to this question with some of them being very specific about which vocal training and coaching tips they would use with one participant commenting that they could now go back to the videos and practice if they felt uncomfortable and one teacher of the deaf commenting how they would use them specifically with their students.

*...Yes I do, I have an interview next month actually. So I do plan to use all the tips to help me get the most out of that upcoming interview.*

*...If I am really nervous I can put my hand on my chest to do a slight hum to calm my nerves and then ask "I did not hear what you said, please repeat that."*

#### 4.2.2.4 Question 8: if you have used any of the vocal training and coaching tips in a real-life situation, can you describe how you did this and what helped you in the interview.

There were mixed responses to this question. Some participants hadn't been for an interview so were unable to comment, whereas others could see the direct benefit. Only participant felt the videos were too long and did not find them useful.

*...Haven't had an interview yet, however I have found I'm more confident around my hearing peers.*

*...Practising with the vocal stuff, some breathing exercises and thought of the scenarios to keep in mind, a day before doing the interview helps to shave off the nervousness and worries, to build up the confidence and be confident. It's the positive thought that matters*

#### 4.2.2.5 Question 9: Do you think there could be more explanation on any of the tips and techniques

Most participants did not think there could be more explanations. However, two participants requested more help with specific questions directed at hearing impairment and generally how to prepare for an interview. How to tell an interviewer about your hearing difference. The stories told were helpful but this could do with some more unpacking.

#### 4.2.2.6 Question 10: If you were to use this website more, what sort of topics would you like included?

Participants had many suggestions as follow up topics which included more information on assistive technologies, and more strategies for dealing with groups, particularly in the workplace and more interaction with the group.

*I would like there to be more interaction between those in the group...*

### 4.3 Online posts

The project design incorporated evaluation of online posts using thematic analysis as well as discourse analysis of any interactions between participants, that is participant to participant conversation threads as opposed to posts to the moderator. The online facilitator of the modules encouraged reflective comments both via the posts and in the content of the modules. Despite this, only a small number of posts were received and the majority of these were from the educators of the deaf who were also participants in the program. One theme in posts from the hearing impaired respondents was shared experience:

*Hey this is amazing! For the first time I feel like I can try some of these things and I'm really excited about the project. Thank you so much! [mentee, Week 1 post]*

*Great video to interact with. Good breathing and vocal exercises to build up confidence [mentor, week 2 post]*

*I like your suggestion on what to do if you didn't hear the question. I have always felt awkward about asking for repeats from anyone as they all look at me as if it were too much effort. [mentee, week 3 post]*

Constraints with the YouTube environment meant that a chat room facility was not incorporated into the design of the modules. No conversations between participants were posted to the forum.

### 4.4 Performative Enquiry

This methodology was used by Geraldine Cook who had taught the Let It Out! group actor vocal training techniques. A fundamental principle in this research drew on Kisber's notion of performance as embodied narrative.<sup>17</sup> A significant feature of previous research and presentation of the vocal training by the young hearing impaired vocal trainers had been the embodied practice they demonstrated in public workshops with other young hearing impaired adults and children and professionals working in the fields of deaf education, speech pathology and audiology.

Alongside the preparation for shifting the "live" programs to a "virtual" delivery, the collaborative workshops were providing an emancipatory potential in which the participants were able to express their common fears, joys and frustrations at being young deaf adults. The four videos established a site where the non-hearing worlds and practices collided, where their processes of understanding, communicating, negotiating, developing systems of understanding and ways of being, seeing, knowing and doing were articulated through their voices and stories in the on-line modules. The vocal training aspects of the modules followed a linear and sequential structure of training but also allowed participants to move back and forth across those aspects they wished to review. The mentoring aspects of the modules were correlated to a particular challenge in the job interview scenario and allowed participants to follow the advice of the mentors through stories of their own job interviews.

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<sup>17</sup> Butler-kisber, Lyn. *Qualitative Enquiry. Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives*. Sage 2010; 136-138.

## 5 Discussion

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Post training questionnaires conducted through Survey Monkey revealed the following emergent themes which are discussed below.

### 5.1 Contextual Framework

The majority of the participants who responded to the questionnaire (28 out of 37) commented that the intention, clarity and sequencing of the videos was clear but some remarked that the length of the videos was too long. High quality filming and editing resources are needed to fully integrate the two programs so that participants would not spend too long on one aspect of the program. Filming and editing with all the creative and technical crew is the most expensive aspect of the on-line delivery and would require a full time commitment at this stage from the vocal trainers and mentors. Sustainability of this program would best be served by a twofold approach: recruiting professionals who work with deaf teenagers and providing another train the trainer program whereby the deaf vocal trainers from the *Let It Out!* program train the professionals in the actor vocal training techniques used on the videos. The professionals would then be able to assist and give feedback to their students and clients but the videos would still show young deaf adults demonstrating the techniques thus still providing the peer to peer mentoring relationship.

### 5.2 Building Communities

The data analysis did not reveal that this form of delivery was successful in building or enhancing social isolation through an on-line delivery. Whilst some participants were actively engaged in responding to the blogs, they were not able to interact with each other. This was partly due to lack of resources with the mentors and trainers to be involved with “chat rooms” as was initially envisaged. Therefore, in order to build the relationships between participants, mentors and trainers would need to be resourced to factor in the “chat” rooms.

### 5.3 Interaction

One of the main questions we were interested in was what kinds of interaction took place. Did they match our intentions? Most of the interactions took the form of the participants responding anonymously to the questionnaire and posting comments and this lack of interaction amongst participants is related to the preceding comment. However, the participants’ responses in the questionnaire show that they were actively engaged with the “actors” on the videos i.e the mentors and the vocal trainers.

## 5.4 Transferability

Our overarching goal was to discover whether the integration of the two types of programs was successful. *The Let It Out* and *Hear For You* programs provide different types of experiences for their participants. The former focuses on specific exercises using actor vocal training techniques which are intended to be transformative activities through an embodied practice whilst the mentoring activities from the *Hear For You* program focus on advice giving and telling stories of mentors' own experiences. Overall the participants commented that both were beneficial with a few who commented that they could not see the relevance of the vocal training. Some participants commented that the vocal training sessions were too long whilst others found it difficult to practise in a private space such as their bedroom. A more effective form of integrated delivery could be achieved through creative editing solutions alongside a guide or mentor such as a professional who works with the deaf community and the inclusion of chat rooms.

## 5.5 Empathic Relationships

The participants' responses clearly demonstrated they had formed an identity with the mentors and vocal trainers. Nearly all the participants commented on the expertise and skill the vocal trainers demonstrated and often referred to them as "actors". This validates the performative context of the videos being an effective mode of delivery in which the hearing impaired participants could identify with the "actors" and thereby trust the knowledge, skills and expertise of their deaf peers.

*"It was really helpful to see young people with hearing difficulties demonstrating how they handle interviews."*

## 6 Recommendations

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### 6.1 Targeted Recruitment Strategy e.g. Teachers of the Deaf

A random recruitment strategy leaves the intention of the work open to too much interpretation, particularly if the young deaf person cannot immediately see the relevance of some aspects of the program. Schools which have a closed broadband network would also receive better transmission which means that the quality of the videos could be enhanced.

### 6.2 Train the Trainer for Professionals who work with Young Deaf Adults

Develop a train the trainer program for professionals who work with young deaf people to be conducted by the *Let It Out* deaf vocal trainers and the mentors from the *Hear For You* program. This would enable a far more embodied context in which to view the videos.

### 6.3 Dedicated Website

Create a dedicated website platform for the videos and ensure that there is a more stable and sustainable technology platform for the participants. A suggestion was to create a Deaf Google.

### 6.4 More Interaction with Deaf Peers

Include chat rooms for the participants, scheduled at specific times so that they can review the virtual work with live activity. This small group or one on one would allow the *Hear Me Out* team to review the content and upgrade with feedback from the participants. Although, building communities was not achieved, the transmission of knowledge about how to prepare for an interview became the most significant part of the on line delivery.

### 6.5 Mixed Modalities for Delivery

The intention of transferring from live to virtual format was to combat the labour intensive nature of both programs. However, the personal nature of the interactions still requires live contacts and relationships to be integrated into the on-line delivery. This is expensive and would need funding that provided time for a more extensive action research methodology to be implemented in phases 3-5

A combination of both on line delivery would enable autonomous practice with the videos integrated with engagement directly with trainers and mentors.

### 6.6 Time

Some of the responses to the questionnaire indicated that we tried to do too much and it became overwhelming for the participants particularly if we were requiring them to embody, embed and transfer skills and knowledge to real live scenarios.

## 7 Future Research and Development Strategies

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Evaluation conducted so far indicates that a number of strategies could be developed to build upon and enhance the content and context of the on-line delivery of *Hear Me Out!* These include:

- Broadband technologies continue to be explored by educators of the deaf and hearing impaired as a means to deliver self empowerment programs to hearing impaired young people in remote settings.
- The program is delivered in closed settings such as schools and clinics which can provide a sustainable environment for the participants from week to week through a closed broadband facility.
- Scaling up and sustainability of the Hear Me Out program is assisted by recruitment through professionals who work with deaf teenagers. These professionals should lead the program with their students and clients.
- To enhance engagement of the participants in the online environment, chat rooms are added to the program so that the participants communicate online to the “Actors” from the videos and with each other.
- A hosted platform resourced by a team of young deaf people is established with ongoing technical support.
- That the Hear Me Out program includes both live and virtual components. This would need long term planning and resourcing and integrated into a specific curriculum or training program for young deaf people.
- Further funding is sought from commercial companies such as Google.

## Appendix

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### Questions for evaluating the interaction of the participants on the website

#### *End-User questions*

1. Did you find the website easy to locate? If not? Why not?
2. Was it easy to read? Which parts were easy and which parts were difficult?
3. Were the instructions clear? Which instructions were clear and which instructions were not?
4. Did you find the links worked well? How could they be improved?
5. Were you able to access the website through your home broadband network? Did this work efficiently?
6. Which modules did you find most useful and which were confusing or unclear?
7. Which parts of the website gave you the most useful information on getting a job?
8. Were the "coaching tips useful"? Which ones in particular?
9. Were the vocal training tips useful? Have you tried these? Were they useful?
10. Have you used any of these tips from the coaching and vocal training in a real-life interview?
11. If you have, can you describe how you did this and what helped you in the interview?
12. If you haven't, can you say why?
13. Do you think there could be more explanation on any of the tips and techniques?
14. How much did you use the captioning?
15. If you were to use this website more, what sort of topics would you like included?

#### *Questions for the mentors and trainers*

1. Please look at the website and participate in the scenario. Do you think this is a realistic situation for a young deaf person? If not, can you suggest alternative scenarios?
2. What did you think about the language that was being used from the "two angels". Was it clear, realistic?
3. Can you make any other suggestions about what kinds of phrases could be used for Hear For You and/or Let It Out Training?
4. Did you find the instructions on the Let It Out Training clear, enjoyable?
5. Have you been able to use any of the approaches and techniques from the website training in a real life situation? (This may not be directly to do with the scenario but may be in situations which occur in your everyday life, e.g. meeting people etc.)
6. Please give us some feedback on the Auslan and captioning? Was this clear and easy to follow or confusing? Can you say which parts were clear and which parts were confusing?
7. Are there any other topics that you think should be included on the website? Please give examples

*Questions for the mentors and trainers regarding the process including interaction between the two components*

1. Was the intention of the research clear to you? If not, which parts were clear and which parts were not?
2. Were the expectations of your involvement clear? Eg. What you would be expected to do, how and when?
3. What aspects of the process did you enjoy? What aspects did you find frustrating?
4. Could you provide suggestions on how the process could be improved?



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