

Words+ Photos By ALEX JACKSON



Spinning the OLD JAZZ RECORDS

Simon Joseph is noticeably excited today. Perched on the edge of his seat, he looks at home when talking music, fast cars and favourite comedies.

He is animated, thoughtful and passionate about many different things. Yet the last year and a half has proved anything but comfortable. With a severe hearing problem and very painful ringing in his ears he was passed from one Consultant to another. Despite his need for a diagnosis and support, each consultant told him there was nothing wrong with his health.

Throughout this period, Simon was not himself and constantly in pain from the drumming noise in his ears. This was having an impact on his love for music and his quality of life. However, after being referred to Ridgeway's Oxford City Community Team for People with a Learning Disability (CTPLD) he found help was on his side. He was seen by the teams Psychiatrist who then referred to community nursing.

With the support of community nurse Karen Herbert and student nurse, Natasha Day, he was supported to attend an appointment at the hearing clinic in Oxford. It was clear that through the tests he could not hear high frequency sounds clearly. Not only this, but Simon was distressed by not understanding his pain and was regularly hitting himself on the side of his head and becoming extremely anxious.

"It was clear there was something wrong and his health needs were not being listened to. People with learning disabilities should have their voice heard and the same access and quality of care as someone without a disability," said Natasha.

"Simon had been suffering for some time with the painful ringing in his ears, but was constantly sent away and refused diagnosis from consultants.

"Until we finally managed to get a diagnosis of tinnitus for him, he was very low in confidence and self esteem and lost a lot of independence. Now with hearing aids, his lifestyle has significantly improved again."

Obviously prepared for being in the spotlight and a

camera, he reveals with pride the book that he and Natasha have created to help Simon understand tinnitus and the effects it has on his ears.

"I felt sad and hurt by the people who said that there was nothing wrong as my ears were really painful. However my hearing aids are much better and my ears hurt less," said Simon.

For a man who has gone through quite a lot in recent months, he feels very at ease and comfortable in his home surroundings with his vast music collection of old vinyl's, CDs and cassettes spread out across his bedroom.

Spinning some of his favourite records, he talks of his love for jazz, big band, folk and an enthusiasm for Johnny Cash. He even takes time out to strum his guitar to a very lively acoustic beat.

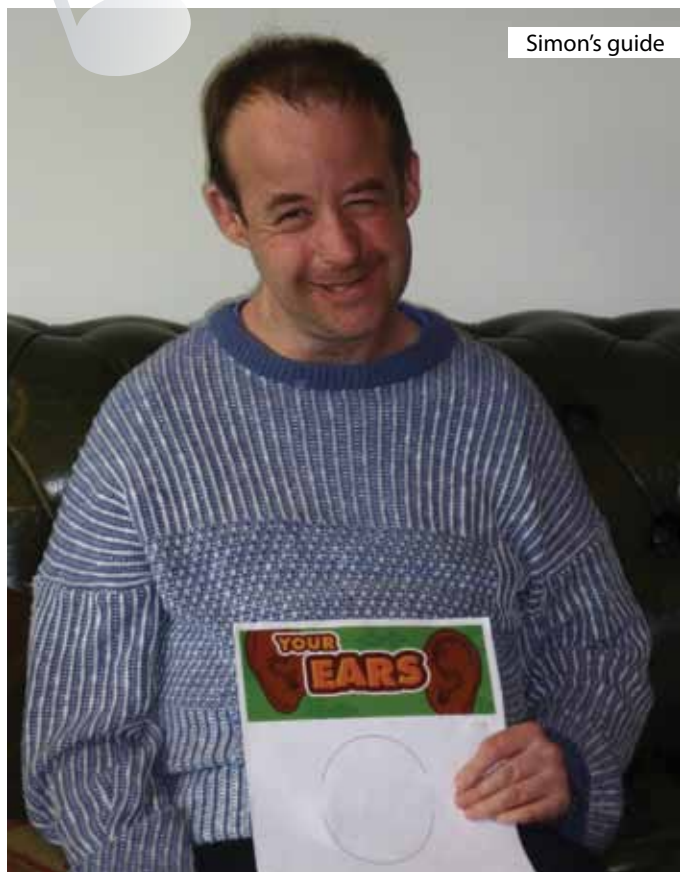
"Our neighbour had a Maserati sports car which makes such a loud noise when it leaves. I liked it a lot and would have loved one."

Simon's mother Maureen said there have been noticeable changes in recent weeks with his new hearing aids.

She said: "There have been dramatic improvements of late with Simon returning back to his hobby of playing the guitar as well as sleeping well again. His quality of life is back – which is absolutely marvellous."

Away from his love for sports cars and race drivers, he is an avid reader and has a soft spot for comedy icons such as Frank Spencer and Mr Bean.

It is heart warming to see Simon with a great big grin, guitar in hand and his favourite jazz 80 CD spinning in the background and with that it is the perfect time to slip away and leave one contented musician in his prime.



Simon's guide

Natasha Day, a student learning disability nurse from Oxford Brookes University, has seen a lot in her brief, yet thoroughly rewarding five months while on placement with the Oxford City Community Learning Disability Team.

As a third year student on her management placement Natasha was allocated her own caseload (under supervision). She worked autonomously throughout managing the many pressures put upon her.

"It has been such an important placement in my development to becoming a qualified learning disability nurse and a real insight into my future profession," said Natasha.

"In the first and second year placements you feel like a student, but here your opinion is not only respected but valued and I felt as if I could challenge other professional opinions and have my voice heard."

Natasha was a strong advocate for Simon (see opposite case study) and was fortunate to see his case through till the end with a positive result. She said it was beneficial not only for her, but also for the service user, their family and the staff supporting them, when a community nurse comes in with a fresh pair of eyes, the skills and knowledge of how to support the individual with a learning disability.

Karen Herbert, who supported Natasha with Simon's nursing input, emphasised the importance of student placements and why there are many benefits from working in partnership with universities and colleges.

She said: "The student support system is a two way process with many benefits. Supporting student nurses encourages us to continually reflect on our practice and the way in which we work.

"Through management placements like Natasha's, students not only have the opportunity to manage their own case load but also get involved in various other roles including Health promotion projects, desensitisation, safeguarding meetings and liaison with other health care providers.

"Natasha demonstrated clear nursing and leadership skills while supporting Simon. This resulted in building up respect and trust from her colleagues in the team."



Jazz 80 in the mix