

The Highlighter News

Accessible news for people with learning disabilities and autism

November and December 2023 issue

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Welcome to The Highlighter News

The Highlighter News aims to help make the news more accessible for people, including people with learning disabilities and/or autism. It is written by and for people with learning disabilities and autism.



Content warning

This issue contains articles about the war in Israel and Palestine.

Top tips

- You can read The Highlighter News with a friend, family member or carer.
- Feeling upset or worried? Speak to someone you trust about what's upsetting you.
- It can be good to take a break from the news sometimes!

The Highlighter News team hosts workshops on:

Understanding The News

Every workshop includes an opportunity for attendees to write an article for The Highlighter News!

Email hello@thehighlighter.org to find out more.

Northern Ireland politics

Written by Michael Slater



Photo of Stormont

New job titles for First and deputy First Ministers?

A committee (called the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee) have suggested that the First and deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland should be called ‘joint first ministers’ instead.

The First and deputy First Ministers of Northern Ireland are roles given to the leaders of Northern Ireland’s government. One is always from the largest unionist political party and one from the largest nationalist party. They have joint authority and form the head of the government in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee’s report also suggested other changes to Northern Ireland’s politics, such as allowing two politicians from any party to be elected as the leaders, not just one from the largest nationalist and one from the largest unionist parties.

Northern Ireland politics

Written by Michael Slater

NI Youth Assembly takes place at Stormont

In early December a group of young people aged 13 -17 from all parts of Northern Ireland met at Stormont for the Youth Assembly. Stormont is the name of the parliament buildings where the Northern Ireland government meets.

The Youth Assembly discussed many of the issues that are facing young people in Northern Ireland, such as mental health and climate change.

American business delegation visits Northern Ireland

In October a delegation of businesspeople from the USA were in Northern Ireland to take a look at potential investment opportunities. A delegation is a group of people that represent a larger group and the USA stands for the United States of America. The delegation was in Northern Ireland for four days and they met with people from companies such as Coca-Cola to discuss the possibility of new jobs and money being invested by America.

Northern Ireland politicians ‘in talks’

Northern Ireland’s government has still not restarted since it ‘collapsed’ in 2022. Recently politicians have been having meetings to discuss how they can get the government working again. We will keep you updated in future issues of The Highlighter News.

Makaton Mondays

Written by Bartek and Lynsey

The Highlighter News interviewed Claire who runs 'Makaton Mondays' on social media. Claire aims to make the world more accessible through the use of Makaton and posts videos of Makaton signs every Monday.

You can find Claire's social media pages at @MakatonMondays



What was your first experience with using makaton?

My first experience using Makaton was in a special needs school in East Belfast, I was a classroom assistant - we would use it with the children to help aid communication!

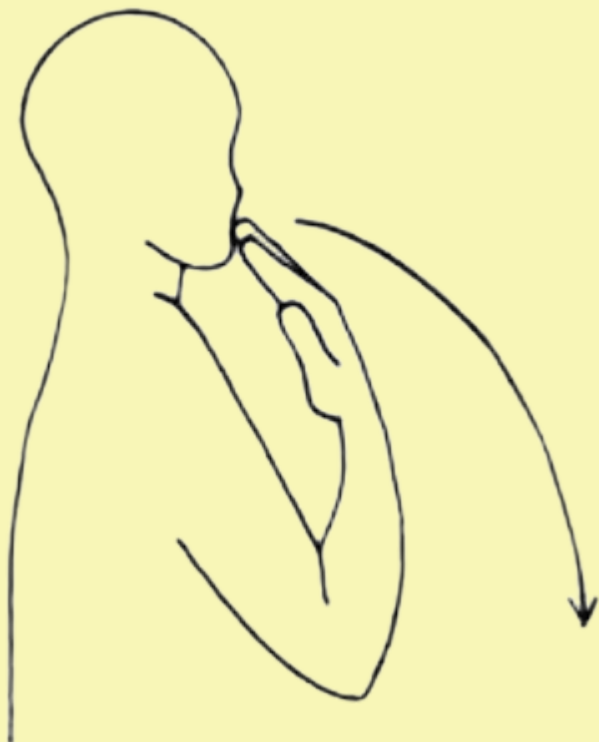
Can you tell us about Makaton Mondays and why you first started it?

I am currently studying to be a learning disability nurse in Queens university, when I went out on my first placement (an adult day centre) the members all used Makaton to communicate their needs. My mind was blown - I genuinely believed that Mr Tumble had created Makaton and it was just for children. After this placement I spoke to my university to see if we would be learning Makaton to help us to be the best nurses we could be. University said no due to funding so I decided to start Makaton Monday to help others learn whilst I was learning.

What has been the reaction to Makaton Mondays?

Makaton Mondays has been and continues to be one of the biggest joys in my life. I have been honoured to win several awards and I even got to go to the King's Coronation (and sit behind Ant & Dec).

I really want to make life accessible to all and I love doing this through the use of Makaton.



Makaton sign for 'please'

What was your first experience when you did makaton to someone?

To be honest it is as if a door is suddenly unlocked for someone and the joy that someone can understand them is realised. I would use Makaton a lot on my social media, with the incredible organisation Mae Murray Foundation and within my university. My slogan is I want to change the world one Makaton sign at a time.

Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate. You can find out more about Makaton at www.makaton.org

Join in with [#MakatonMondays](https://twitter.com/MakatonMondays) by following Claire on social media @MakatonMondays

Learn more about the Mae Murray Foundation by visiting their website: www.maemurrayfoundation.org

You will likely have heard or read about the war taking place in Palestine and Israel. It can be very upsetting to read about - and also confusing. On the next few pages are articles explaining the situation.

If you don't wish to read about it, skip ahead to page 10.

Background

There has been conflict in Israel and Palestine for many years. This is due to several reasons, including a dispute about what areas of land belong to which country. There have been many efforts to end the conflict and bring peace, with other countries around the world involved.

The area in Palestine called Gaza is ruled by an organisation called Hamas. Hamas have been classified as a terrorist organisation. In October, Hamas launched an attack on Israel which was the start of the current conflict.



Map shows location of Israel and Palestine

What is happening now?

The conflict is continuing in Gaza and other nearby places in Palestine. Many people have been killed and injured. Lots of people have had to leave their homes.

Hamas has taken people hostage and recently allowed some of these people to go free in exchange for Israel releasing prisoners from Palestine.

Many politicians have called for a ceasefire, which is a break from fighting.

Opinions on the war

Countries around the world are sometimes divided in who they are support. In Northern Ireland, communities can also have different opinions, with some people from Unionist communities supporting Israel and some people from Nationalist communities supporting Palestine.

You may also see people arguing on social media about the war. It can be difficult to fact-check during times like these and people may have very different opinions on what is happening. There can also be photos and videos posted that aren't real or are very upsetting to watch. Remember, it can be good to take a break from the news and social media.

Sports

by Bartek Wysokowski

Northern Irish Open Snooker

From the 22nd of October to the 29th of October, the Northern Irish Open was held at The Waterfront as part of the Home Nations Series. The Home Nations Series is a series of events for all countries in the UK. There are four of them held across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The winner of the Northern Irish Open this year is British snooker player Judd Trump winning 9 frames to 3 beating another British player Chris Wakelin. A frame is 1 game of snooker and to win a frame, you need to get more points than your opponent. Judd Trump won 3 tournaments in a row and has now won the English Open, and the Wuhan Open in China.



Photo of Judd Trump

The next Home Nations Series event will be in Scotland for the Scottish Open. It will start on the 11th of December and finishes on the 17th of December.

Sports

by Bartek Wysokowski

Rugby World Cup Final

On Saturday 28th of October, the Rugby World Cup Final was held in the Stade de France in Paris, France. The final of the Rugby World Cup started at 7 PM in UK time. The Rugby World Cup is every four years.

The winner of this year's Rugby World Cup is South Africa winning a great and very close match against New Zealand. The score was 12 points to 11. This is South Africa's 2nd world cup title in a row after winning in 2019 against England 32 to 12. In the bronze medal match, England claimed the bronze medal after winning against Argentina in another very close match winning 26 points to 23 points.

The next Rugby World Cup after this one will be in Australia in 2027. It will run from the 10th of September to the 23th of October 2027.

**Thank you for reading this month's issue of
The Highlighter News.**

**Is there a topic or news story you'd like us to write
about in the next issue?**

Let us know by emailing hello@thehighlighter.org
