

Spotlight on Libby Hill

Libby Hill was the winner of the 2018 Katie Rough Memorial Award at the Shine a Light Awards.

Libby from Uttoxeter, is an independent speech and language therapist (SLT) with over 30 years' experience.

In addition to running her private SLT sessions, Libby dedicates her time, free of charge, to support children with speech, language and communication needs who cannot afford to pay for private sessions and who are waiting to be seen by the NHS. She has taken the time to complete training in animal-assisted therapy, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to provide a more holistic approach to tackling SLT issues in children.

Offering her experience pro bono on a monthly basis, Libby has set up free training sessions on selective mutism (SM) in her local area of Derbyshire and Staffordshire – a initiative supported by counsellors and psychologists – as well as establishing training sessions in Manchester with adult SM sufferer Sabrina Branwood.

And as if that wasn't enough, Libby also voluntarily runs her local branch of Afasic, which seeks to raise awareness and create better services and provision for children and young people with speech and language impairments.

Libby is seen as a lifeline to many families who would not otherwise be able to afford her services. Debbie, whose daughter suffered severe communication issues for five years, described the impact Libby made within her own family: "My daughter was eight and had been unable to talk since she started nursery at three. She used to freeze if someone talked to her and she couldn't talk to staff at school or other family members including grandparents. This was having a major impact on her anxiety levels, friendships, school life – in fact all aspects of her life. We were so worried, but couldn't get any help from CAHMS [the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service] or from the local SLT."

Offering her support without charge, Libby arranged to meet the staff at the young girl's school, and trained them with a Small Steps Programme to problem solve the issues. Libby also worked with a therapy dog to address further problems with family members at home. The girl responded quickly and well. "We have our daughter back," said Debbie. "A nine-year old who can talk in school, local shops, and even the leisure centre."

Libby Hill has been awarded the *2018 Katie Rough Memorial Award* for her tireless work to tackle speech and language issues among young people, and for the wide range of approaches and additional training she has used to help disadvantaged children like Debbie's daughter.

For further information about the 2018 Shine a Light Awards visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk and follow us on Twitter #awards_SAL