



Deafblind International Communication Network webinar

The Deafblind International Communication Network is delighted to host a webinar on **Thursday 19th November 2026**.

Webinar 8: Learning from Protactile. Supporting Language Emergence for People with Congenital Deafblindness

What can research and theory based on the work and lived experiences of the Protactile community teach us about supporting language emergence?

This webinar explores how we can bridge insights from Protactile language, developed by and for DeafBlind people, to enrich how we support people with congenital deafblindness (CDB) who are early language users and naturally experience the world in a tactile way.

Important note: This webinar is not an instructional session on how to use or become proficient in Protactile language, which belongs uniquely to the Protactile community. Rather, it is an invitation to discuss how we, as communication partners, can privilege the tactile modality to cultivate attunement, shared exploration, and meaning-making.

There will be two webinars on the same topic run in different time zones, participants can choose the time zone from their region or the best time that suits their schedule. We are working with local partners to provide different language interpretation; we would be keen to hear from members about their language needs and will provide more information on this when available.

During the webinar it is possible to ask questions. Registrations are essential.

All times are listed in presenter and panellists' local times. To support you to work out the time of the webinar that suits your schedule we advise you to [check your local time zone](#)

What We Will Explore

- **Bridging Models:** How Protactile theory aligns with and validates established CDB models (such as Rødbroe, Nafstad, and Janssen), reinforcing patterns of togetherness, reciprocity, and co-exploration.
- **Privileging the Tactile:** Shifting away from a purely visual/auditory access framework ("being eyes and ears") toward continuous contact space, co-presence, and tactile backchanneling.
- **Shifting from Instrumental to Conversational:** Moving past simple labelling or functional signing to establish a narrative, relational space based on the person's immediate tactile attention.
- **Supporting communication partners:** Exploring how we support communication partners to be more attuned, and to approach interaction and communication in more tactile collaborative way.

Program Outline

- **Introduction:** Welcome, housekeeping, and access setup.
- **Setting the Stage:** Key considerations in congenital deafblindness.
- **Our Position:** Our role as supporters of language emergence.
- **Colleague Reflections:** Four brief, 5-minute reflections from professionals who have undertaken online training in Protactile theory, reading, and research:
- **Open Discussion:** Interactive conversation and Q&A with all participants.

Who Should Attend?

This webinar series is designed for family members of children and adults born with deafblindness, or those with limited language (speech or sign) looking to develop their communicative interplay. Professionals, educators, and communication guides are highly welcome to join and participate in this collaborative learning space.

Session 1: Thursday 19th November 2026

Time: Coordinated Universal Time: 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (+0 UTC)

Local times:

- Sydney / Melbourne (AEDT): 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM (+10 UTC)
- Paris / Berlin (CET): 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (+1 UTC)
- London (GMT): 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM (+0 UTC)
- India (IST): 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM (+5:30 UTC)
- Singapore (SGT): 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM (+8 UTC)
- Tokyo (JST): 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (+9 UTC)

Presenter: Helle Buelund Selling, Steve Rose, Timi Claeys, Kirsten Costain, Meredith Prain

Facilitators: Dr. Meredith Prain and Mr. Steve Rose, Australia

[Register in advance for this webinar \(session 1\)](#)

Session 2: Thursday 19th November 2026

Time: Coordinated Universal Time: 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (+0 UTC)

Local times:

- New York (EST): 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM (-5 UTC)
- London (GMT): 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (+0 UTC)
- Paris / Berlin (CET): 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM (+1 UTC)
- Mexico City (CST): 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (-6 UTC)
- Bogota / Lima (PET): 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM (-5 UTC)
- São Paulo (BRT): 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM (-3 UTC)

Presenter: Helle Buelund Selling, Steve Rose, Timi Claeys, Kirsten Costain, Meredith Prain

Facilitators: Prof. Saskia Damen, the Netherlands and Ms. Helle Buelund Selling, Denmark

[Register in advance for this webinar \(session 2\)](#)

About the speakers

Helle Buelund Selling is a member of the Nordic network on Tactile Language and Development, and consultant at the Center for Deafblindness and Hearing loss in Aalborg, Denmark.

Steve Rose is a Speech Pathologist and Deafblind Consultant based in Melbourne Australia, supporting children with congenital deafblindness. He has worked in different roles, intervenor, family advisory, therapist, manager, trainer, advocate and champion for people with deafblindness in UK and Australia.

Timi Claeys is a trainer and coach for persons with congenital deafblindness and their support staff, as well as an interpreter for the deaf and deafblind. She is a board member of the Flemish advocacy association for the deafblind. For her Master's thesis in Pedagogical Sciences at the University of Groningen, she conducted research into the application of PT principles in the communication with a deafblind adult. Areas of interest: linguistic and cognitive development in persons with congenital deafblindness, multimodal interpreting, staff support and video analysis

Dr Kirsten Costain has worked for 15 years in the field of deafblindness after emigrating to Norway, first as a teacher at a school for children with congenital deafblindness and subsequently as an adviser in special education, combined sensory loss and congenital deafblindness in Norway. Her main interests are embodiment in cognition and language, tactile meaning-making and communication, and the phenomenology of perception.

Dr Meredith Prain has worked with people with deafblindness of all ages since 1995 in the roles of Speech Pathologist, Deafblind Consultant, Researcher and Project Manager. She has particular interests in high quality interactions, staff development, and Video Interaction Guidance.