Taivo Poolmaa Biography

Taivo Poolmaa is a 42-year-old deafblind person from Estonia whose life experience reflects the daily challenges of living with both hearing and vision impairments, as well as the resilience needed to cope with them.

Taivo was born as the third child in his family. His two older brothers were hard of hearing, and he too was born with a hearing impairment. During his teenage years, he began to notice that, in addition to his hearing loss, his vision was also deteriorating. At the age of 16, the first clearer signs appeared: difficulties walking along pavements, noticing street posts and approaching people, following sign language against a bright background, and adjusting to changing light conditions. Later, it became clear that his brothers had experienced similar problems as well.

During his school years, his vision loss was not yet severe enough to significantly interfere with his studies. After graduating from the school for the deaf, Taivo trained as a woodworker and later worked as a CNC machine operator. A well-lit working environment enabled him to do his job successfully. At the age of 26, his vision problems worsened significantly, and moving around in the dark became especially difficult.

For the past five years, Taivo has been living in London, England. When he first moved there, he worked assembling furniture. It was after moving to England that he received an official diagnosis of Usher syndrome, confirming what he had already suspected.

A year ago, Taivo Poolmaa accepted the challenge of leading the Estonian Deafblind Support Association. In this role, he contributes to representing the interests of deafblind people, gathering essential information, and seeking solutions to improve the coping abilities and quality of life of deafblind people in Estonia.