

## **Toni**

Before I had my cochlear implant, life was very difficult. I lost my hearing - it started to go in my late 30's which was quite a long time ago! I knew it would happen because it is an inherited deafness, my brother had the same. I thought "Oh, I will get a hearing aid it won't be too bad", but I didn't realise how awful it would be. There came a time when the hearing aid didn't do much for me and this is why the cochlear implant was suggested.

One to one I have always been not too bad, but in social situations I would just sit there not understanding the conversation at all, and not knowing what family members were doing in their lives. I had to ask someone afterwards what was happening. I just felt disconnected and very, very frustrated. But I got used to it and I felt this is just how it is going to be, until the audiologist at Shelley Road near where I live suggested that I might benefit from a cochlear implant and I said, "What me?", and she said, "Well, try!". I said, "Am I deaf enough?" and she said "Well, you only have overall 14% hearing" and I was shocked. So that's how this started.

In the early days when I was first connected it was a bit of a shock. People's voices sounded like Daleks - or Donald Duck, I prefer that to Daleks. I did hear some sounds straight away that I hadn't heard before, for instance, the indicator - I have never heard that for years and years. The cuckoo clock had to be turned off, the ticks were very loud. First of all people's voices were very difficult, and it took me until my next appointment when I was 'tweaked' before I started understanding people. I did hear new sounds but not a lot and it was very difficult, very new. But it's early days yet and I am actually still learning.

I can only go on what other people say, they tell me that I am understanding conversations a lot more. I go to lip-reading classes, I hadn't been for one term and I went back for the last day to see everybody and give them a little talk about the cochlear implant. The lip-reading teacher asked me to give a little talk and I did and then she spoke to them and said, "I have known Toni over 20 years and she definitely is much better in conversation and she has her old bounce back" which means I am more confident.

So, it's ongoing, I am very hopeful that it is going to get better and better. So it's quite exciting. It's early days yet, I have been told to wait six months, maybe a year before it finally kicks in and I am sure it will, I am very hopeful.