



# HEAR THIS

LIONS CLUBS DISTRICT 105M 'HEARING FOR ALL CAMPAIGN'

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## Hearing for ALL - a sound investment

As many of you will know, I have for a long time made efforts to champion for people with hearing loss. Over the past years, on many occasions I have felt despondent as it would appear to me that many people, obviously those without hearing difficulties, have not taken the issue of hearing loss seriously.

The fact is that around 1 in 7, that's one in seven, yes ONE IN SEVEN - and increasing largely due to people living to a higher age - have hearing difficulties.

It's not a disease, and you don't catch it - it just happens. And if you are on the receiving end it can be devastating. You can lack confidence, feel left out, isolated, frustrated, lonely, angry, even sometimes sorry for yourself.

Who cares whether the person, or people, you are talking to can hear you or not? Well everyone should care. What is the point of saying anything if what you are saying can't be heard? If you have something to say, surely you want everyone to hear it - not just the other six of seven!

Let's make a difference. Let Lions make a difference by supporting my 'HEARING FOR ALL CAMPAIGN'. Thank you.

## Some facts and figures

Here are some facts and figures about people with hearing difficulties; **deaf and hard of hearing**:

- There are an estimated 9 million deaf and hard of hearing people in the UK. The figure is rising as the number of people over 60 increases.
- In the UK, there are about 20,000 children aged 0 to 15 years who are moderately to profoundly deaf. Many more have temporary hearing problems in early childhood.
- There are an estimated 123,000 deafened people in the UK aged 16 and over.
- There are about 23,000 deaf-blind people in the UK.
- It is difficult to say how many people in the UK use BSL (British Sign Language) as their first or preferred language; current estimates vary between 50,000 and 70,000.
- Most of the 9 million deaf and hard of hearing people in the UK have developed a hearing loss as they grew older. Only about 2% of young adults are deaf or hard of hearing. Around the age of 50 the proportion of deaf people begins to increase sharply and 55% of people over 60 are deaf or hard of hearing.

## Are YOU one of them?

Perhaps you should just read that last sentence again!

Here it is:

*'Around the age of 50 the proportion of deaf people begins to increase sharply and 55% of people over 60 are deaf or hard of hearing'.*

Those of you who have been in Lions over seventeen years may recall at the Multiple District Convention in Jersey, I spoke on the subject of membership and pointed out that unless we started recruiting members at around the age we were when we joined Lions, (at that time the average Lion was around 50 and had joined at around 40 years of age) in ten years time the average age of Lions could well be around 60! That was seventeen years ago and I would think that if not the average now, certainly many Lions are over the age of 60. Now, you may want to read that paragraph again!

*'Around the age of 50 the proportion of deaf people begins to increase sharply and 55% of people over 60 are deaf or hard of hearing'.*

Yes - that is over half! I bet you are getting the picture now.

But how many of you admit to having a hearing problem?

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## Recognising hearing loss

It is also a known fact that it can take someone up to 15 years to take action and to admit that they have a hearing problem.

I first recognised I had a hearing problem in 1982, when I was 41. However, my children had questioned my hearing ability for many years before then. I believe I had recognised that I had a hearing disability but would not admit it. Maybe because one often associates hearing loss with old age! Certainly not the sort of thing one would want to admit to at an age of under 40!

I was fitted with my first hearing aid on 7th January 1986 at the age of 45; and I hated it. I found it difficult to cope with and very difficult, impossible in some cases, to cope without it. But I persevered with it, particularly when I was told I would not get support for my ambition to be a District Governor if I did not wear my hearing aid and come to terms with my disability! I now have hearing aids for both ears, although I only wear both in certain circumstances. Well, that's a little about me. Now you.

## Hearing Matters

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People, RNID, have partnered with The Co-operative Group to launch a hearing check called 'Hearing Matters' a national campaign to ensure that in future everyone over the age of 55 is invited to have their hearing screened on the NHS.

To date over 400,000 people have taken part in the RNID Hearing Check and they want to check 1 million people. You can be one of them by calling 0844 800 3838. Calls from a BT land-line cost up to 5p per minute. Other providers' charges may vary. A call set-up charge may apply. The hearing check, which takes about 5 minutes, is designed to help identify people who have hearing loss and encourage them to take action. Hearing does matter. That is why, if you think you may have a hearing problem, you should take the Hearing Check today!

## District 105M Convention

Those of you who wear hearing aids and largely depend on a hearing loop system will know that there was not a loop system in operation AGAIN this year! Over many years now I have tirelessly campaigned for adequate hearing facilities at Conventions and Forums. Yes, for me, but not only me. Also for ALL the people that attend these events who have hearing difficulties. Year after year, I know I have made my self unpopular with some Lions over my continued pressure to get something done. I know it aggravates some people that I continuously ask whether adequate hearing facilities are in place. I'm sure they wonder what the fuss is all about. Well it's simple really, what is the

point of going to these events if you cannot hear what is being said and take part. Let's face it, most of these events are listening to what someone has to say! A lot of them perhaps too much! Maybe the reason numbers are dwindling is because they can't hear what is being said. After all, we are all getting older!

## So what are we going to do about it?

We have had SightFirst - what about HearingOnce - and for All. Or just - HEARING FOR ALL. And it needn't cost you a penny!

Of course you can fundraise to help people with hearing difficulties if you want to. But there are lots of things you can do that cost nothing. For instance, if you do have some form of hearing loss - recognising it.

If you don't - understanding for people that do. Action to help where you can. Support my 'HEARING FOR ALL CAMPAIGN'.

Tell me you support me, if you do, and let me have YOUR reaction. Have the courage to tell me if you don't - and why.

I intend to produce this publication at intervals throughout the year and you can make a contribution to future issues. If you have any comments to make, let's hear them. I will not publish your name if you prefer not.

Come on - LET'S BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER - TOGETHER.

If you have something to say, that you would like to be published in the next issue, please email to: rogerandjayne@onweb.me.uk Or send to: Lion Roger M Handcock, 51 Glenfield Drive, Great Doddington, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN29 7TE