

LONDON MARATHON

Why on earth would a person with chronic knees who abhors running on the roads ever even consider doing the London Marathon?

Well it's like this...

I am very lucky to be the Aunty of Heather Johnson. My very beautiful and very talented niece attends a mainstream secondary school in Chesterfield, where she is a popular and active student who achieves well. She is a keen guitar player, adores swimming, has a sharp wit and a wicked sense of humour! She is also profoundly deaf and has bi-lateral cochlear implants. She has had a long and difficult journey to get where she is today – a place which most children and their families take totally for granted!

Having the opportunity to run the London Marathon for The Ear Foundation provides a great opportunity to give back a little support to a charity which has not only provided vital support for Heather but also for thousands of children and their families both in this country and across the world.



The Ear Foundation was first set up in 1989 to bring the new technique of cochlear implantation to the UK, offering useful hearing to profoundly deaf children. The Ear Foundation is a unique charity providing support for children across the UK with cochlear implants and hearing aids – through information, community education, resources, and research & development.

In the UK around 800 children per year are born profoundly deaf, and a number of others become deaf through accident or illness. Profound deafness makes it difficult for a child to learn how to talk, read and write through the usual path of hearing, which affects their ability to participate fully in family and social life.

For these children, modern technology including either a hearing aid or a cochlear implant, may help. The fitting of the technology is only the start. In order to benefit from the implant, the children, their families and their local professionals (for example teachers of the Deaf, speech and language therapists) need ongoing training and resources, not offered by statutory services.

The Ear Foundation offers a bridge between the clinic-based audiology services and the child's own community, by providing education and support for those living and working with the children on a daily basis. This ensures the children can use their new hearing in their everyday lives, where the majority of them are now attending mainstream schools and are joining fully in family life.

Over 3,500 children and young people in the UK now have cochlear implants, representing over half profoundly deaf children. Despite this high figure, The Ear Foundation receives no statutory support and it relies a great deal on donations and grants.



I do have a chronic knee condition which meant I was unable to do sport throughout my childhood and teenage years, despite major surgery in the 1980s. I eventually decided not to let my knee condition shackle my life and ventured into fell-running when I moved to Todmorden in the 1990s and first met up with the legend that is Tod Harriers! However, my knees did continue to deteriorate and a couple of years ago I once again succumbed to major surgery.

This surgery has 'patched up' my knees again for a while – and my fell running and cross-training helps to support them. I feel that I have been given a second chance – and I want to make it count for something. I know I only have a short period of time in which I would manage a long road event such as the London Marathon. So I am going to do it this year – and I am going to use this 'second chance' to raise money for a charity which makes an enormous difference to the quality of life for thousands of profoundly deaf children and their families all over the world.

I do have a just-giving website if you would like to find out more, or would like to donate to my charity run.

<http://www.justgiving.com/helenelizabethwilson>