

Sound Advice at The Ear Foundation

I'm Maria Cameron and I co-ordinate Sound Advice at The Ear Foundation. I'm a Speech and Language Therapist and Teacher of the Deaf and have had many years working with children and adults with and without cochlear implants.

Sound Advice was set up at the beginning of 2008 to respond to a need expressed by both adult cochlear implant users themselves and the parents of children with cochlear implants.

Adults wanted a somewhere to go where they could meet up with other adult implant users and where they could get advice and information about how to make the most of their device. To that end we started our "Adult Days." One of the great outcomes of the days is the time people have to talk to each other and exchange ideas, what has worked well for them, what hasn't and does anyone else have that experience. The groups are a mixture of deafened and born deaf adults who have elected to have an implant after their teenage years. Both learn a lot about each other's quite different perspectives.

The Adult Days are held roughly each month with some on Fridays and some on Saturdays to try to give everyone an opportunity to be able to come. Some meetings have a specific focus such as the music day with Geoff Plant where he got us all listening to different types of music and talking about the change in experience of how music is perceived post implant. This was one area where deafened and born deaf adults had quite a different outlook in that born deaf adults had never heard music the way hearing people do and so didn't feel they had "lost" anything.

Another focus day was on using the telephone. This went down really well with people being very keen to look at what technology is about to support them. Some people really liked the idea of using a blue-tooth device to link with the cochlear implant to improve the signal. On the day our technical advisor was available for "taster" sessions where people could ask questions and try out some of the gadgets! They could also have taster sessions with me thinking about listening skills on the phone. This tended to be in small groups and from that several people have booked to return for private individual sessions in order to improve their skills. Some adults come every month for a series of private therapy sessions to improve listening and communication skills – the service is there to suit whatever people want.

For more information look on the website: www.earfoudnation.org.uk click on Sound Advice or email Rachel@reafoundation.org.uk or maria@earfoundation.org.uk