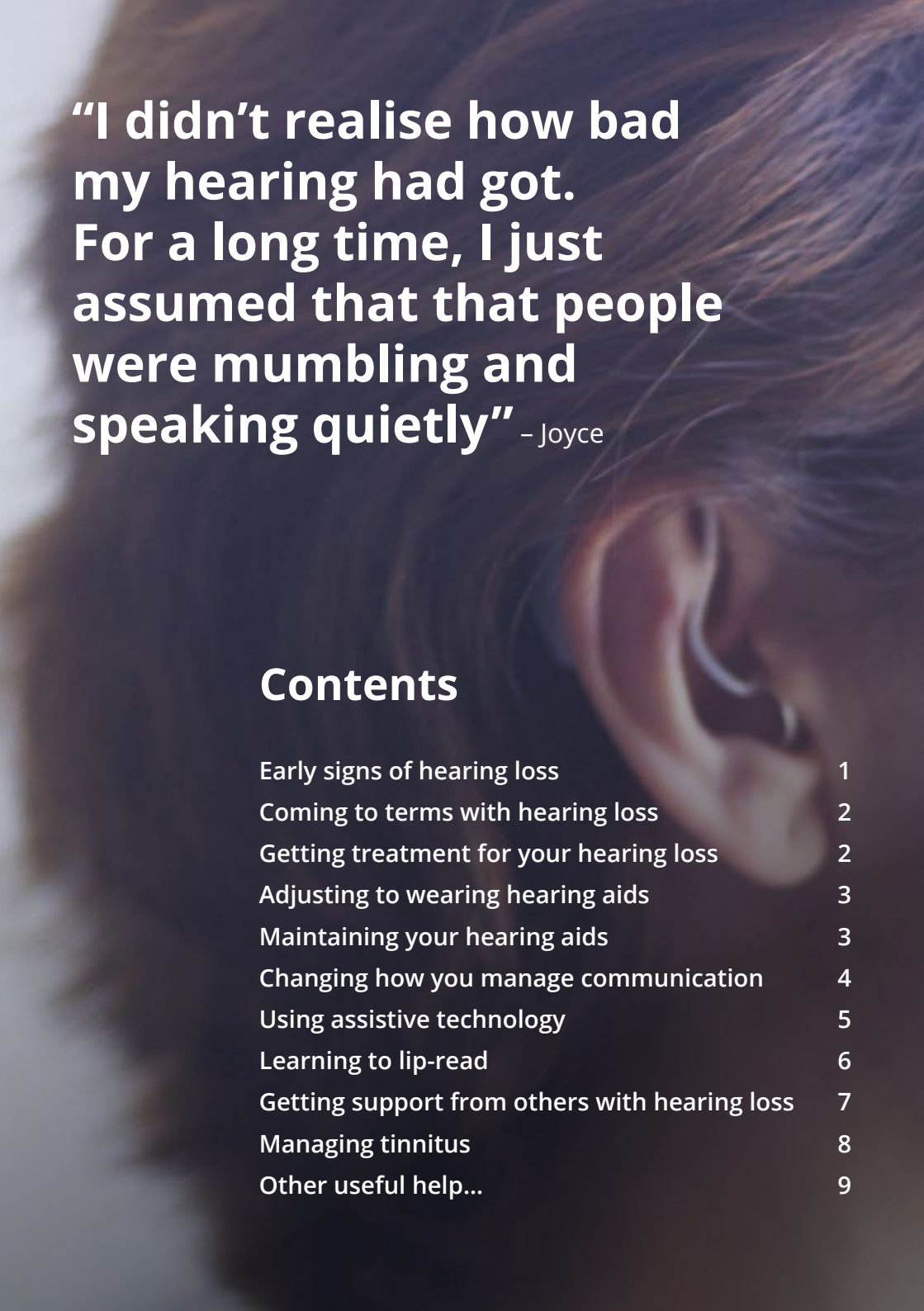


Living well with hearing loss

Essential information
by and for people
with hearing loss in
Cambridgeshire

CAMBRIDGESHIRE
HEARING HELP 

A close-up photograph of a person's ear, showing a hearing aid device. The background is dark and out of focus, emphasizing the ear and the device.

“I didn’t realise how bad my hearing had got. For a long time, I just assumed that that people were mumbling and speaking quietly” – Joyce

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Hearing loss is very common

If you have hearing loss, you are certainly not alone. 1 in 6 UK adults have hearing loss. As we age our hearing is more likely to deteriorate, which is why hearing loss affects over 40% of people aged 50+ and over 70% of people aged 70+.

Early signs of hearing loss

Some of the most common early signs of hearing loss in one or both ears include:

- Difficulty understanding speech in noisy places.
- Difficulty hearing over the phone.
- Other people complaining you've got the TV or radio too loud.
- Having to ask people to repeat themselves more frequently than normal.

The most common types of hearing loss typically reduce our ability to hear high-pitched sounds. For example, you may struggle to hear birdsong or children's voices but have normal or near-normal hearing of low-pitched sounds.

If you're unsure whether you have hearing loss, you could take Action on Hearing Loss' easy hearing check for free at www.actiononhearing.org.uk/hearingcheck or over the phone on 0844 800 3838 (calls are charged at local rates). However, this check is not a substitute for professional assessment.

IMPORTANT: If you experience sudden or rapid hearing loss you should seek immediate medical advice because this could indicate a serious condition requiring urgent treatment. You should also talk to your GP if you have pain or discharge in your ears.



Coming to terms with hearing loss

Hearing loss can be hard to come to terms with. When you find it harder to hear others with ease, your confidence and self-esteem can be affected. You may also go through a process of grieving the loss of your hearing. It is also common to feel embarrassed about having to ask people to speak up or repeat themselves.

All this may result in you avoiding or delaying getting the help you need. However, it's really important to ask for help as soon as you can because evidence shows that acting early to address hearing loss will help you continue to enjoy life to the full. This short pamphlet guides you through some of the help that's available in Cambridgeshire.

If you would like more comprehensive information on how to live well with hearing loss, you could take our free 'Your Hearing Matters' online course. You can also attend one of our free 'Living Well with Hearing Loss' workshops. Please visit www.cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk/living-well/ to find our more or contact us.

Getting treatment for your hearing loss

If you suspect you have hearing loss, the next step is to see your GP. They will check to see what health conditions may be causing your hearing loss and might do a simple hearing test. You may be referred to an ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) specialist or directly to an audiologist.

If you are referred to an audiologist, hearing aids may be recommended. On the NHS hearing aids are provided free of charge and are all modern digital aids suitable for all types of hearing loss.

“When I am issued with new hearing aids I usually need to go back to the audiologist for some reprogramming. For example, if some sounds, like the chinking of keys, cause distortion or if a new mould isn’t fitting comfortably.” – Ian



Adjusting to wearing hearing aids

It can take several months to adjust to wearing new hearing aids and really getting the most out of them. You will notice small changes right from the start, but it’s important to be patient. If you have questions or concerns about your progress, be sure to speak to your audiologist. It is common to need further appointments with your audiologist for adjustments to be made to programming or fittings, so do not be afraid to request these.

Maintaining your hearing aids

Hearing aids require regular maintenance. Tubing needs replacing every three to six months and wax blockages need to be removed. Your hearing aid provider will help you maintain your hearing aids.

Our charity supports those who need to access NHS hearing aid maintenance closer to home. You can drop in (no need to make an appointment) to one of our Hearing Help Sessions across the county or contact our office to make an appointment for a home or residential visit. Please refer to our website:

www.cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk for Hearing Help Session times and venues or contact us by telephone/text/email.

Other positive steps to take to manage hearing loss

Wearing and maintaining hearing aids is just one of many positive steps you can take to manage your hearing loss and continue to live life to the full.

Changing how you manage communication

You can take a lot of the stress out of living with hearing loss by changing the way you manage communication with those around you. Here are some top tips...

- Wear your glasses/contact lenses so that you can see the person speaking to you as well as possible.
- Don't pretend you can hear - this will disempower you and frustrate the other person.
- Don't be embarrassed about your hearing loss or try to hide it, there are lots of people just like you.
- Take care of yourself – take breaks from listening situations and integrate rest and relaxation in to your daily routine because hearing loss causes stress and strain.
- Be confident and assertive about your hearing loss. For example, if required: tell others you have hearing loss, ask them to speak more slowly or clearly, ensure you have your best ear to them, and if you don't hear what they say ask them to say it again or say it in a different way.
- Take control of your hearing environment and manage your needs in advance. For example, book a table in a quiet corner

of a restaurant, reserve a seat in the front row for a talk/performance, and ask for a loop system (see below).

- If required, use assistive technology to boost your hearing/help you hear better in challenging listening situations (see below).
- Learn to lip-read (see below).

Using assistive technology

A huge array of assistive technology is available to boost your hearing or alert you to sounds and danger in specific situations. For example:

- Extra loud, flashing or vibrating alarms connected to your smoke/fire/carbon monoxide detectors, doorbell, telephone and baby monitor.
- Amplified telephones with volume and tone control.
- FM, infrared and Bluetooth technology which transmits/streams sound from your phone/radio/TV to headphones or your hearing aids.
- Personal listeners that boost everyday sounds and hearing in difficult listening situations, such as meetings and social events.
- Hearing loops in public places which transmit sound directly to hearing aids with a 'loop' programme (ask your audiologist for this programme).

You may be eligible for a long-term loan of some of the assistive technology you need from Cambridgeshire County Council's Sensory Services.

Telephone: 0345 045 5202

Email: careinfo@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Website: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/careandsupport

This service will also be able to tell you if you are eligible for any other assistance to help you maintain your wellbeing and independence, including state benefits.

If your hearing loss makes it harder for you to do your job, you can also apply for Access to Work grant from the government to cover the cost of assistive technology and other practical support you need in the workplace. Website: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

If you need to purchase assistive technology yourself, reputable suppliers include:

Connevans: www.connevans.co.uk

Tel: 01737 247571

Action on Hearing Loss:

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/live-well/products-and-technology/

Tel: 0333 014 4525

Sarabec: www.sarabec.com

Tel: 01642 247789

VAT relief: If you have hearing loss you are entitled to VAT relief on the assistive technology products you need. Make sure this VAT relief is applied by the supplier when you make your purchase.

“I have a vibrating pad under my mattress to alert me if the fire alarms go off and a vibrating alarm clock under my pillow to wake me up in the morning. Knowing that I am safe in the house and won’t be late for work ensures that I get a good night’s sleep!” – Liz

Learning to lip-read

Lip-reading is a way of understanding speech by visually interpreting the movements of the lips, face and tongue, and will help you hear better in challenging listening situations. For information about lip-reading classes and groups in Cambridgeshire visit the ‘lip-reading’ section of our website directory:

www.cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk/website-directory/

or contact us by telephone/text/email.



Getting support from others with hearing loss

“The most important information I learnt about how to effectively manage my hearing loss came from other people with hearing loss. Meeting people in the same boat also normalised the condition for me which stopped me feeling ashamed of it and trying to hide it” – Mike

Getting support from others with hearing loss is so beneficial because they know what you are going through, offer you practical advice and suggestions that professionals may not know about, and increase your sense of belonging.

Cambridgeshire Hearing Help runs ‘Hear For You’ support groups. Visit the ‘peer support’ section of our website directory: www.cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk/website-directory/ or contact us by telephone/text/email.

The Cambridgeshire Hard of Hearing Club is a monthly social gathering for people with hearing loss in Cambridgeshire. Visit their website for further information: <http://groupspaces.com/CambsHOHClub/>
Email: information.hohclub@gmail.com Text: **07876 108963**

There are also numerous forums and Facebook groups for people with hearing loss, which you can search online.

Managing tinnitus

It is common to experience tinnitus along with hearing loss. Tinnitus is described as the perception of sounds in the head or ears which have no external source. It is rarely an indication of a serious disorder but if you have tinnitus which is bothersome you should discuss this with your GP, who may refer you to an ENT specialist for further investigation. There are many strategies that can be helpful in managing tinnitus including relaxation, counselling, sound therapy and hearing aids to correct hearing loss.

The Cambs Tinnitus Support Group encourages a positive outlook and coping strategies for those living with tinnitus. Visit their website for further information www.cambstsg.com or contact Alan Yeo Email: mga978@hotmail.co.uk
Telephone: 01223 243570

The British Tinnitus Association offers expert advice and information about tinnitus free of charge via their helpline: 0800 018 0527, open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.
www.tinnitus.org.uk

Other useful help...

Action on Hearing Loss offers lots of information and support on a whole range of subjects relating to deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus.

Telephone: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000 (freephone)

Text: 07800 000 360

Email: information@hearingloss.org.uk

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Hearing Link offers lots of information and support for people with hearing loss, including intensive rehabilitation for people who are experiencing the trauma of sudden acquired hearing loss or deafness.

Telephone/Text: 07526 123 255

Email: enquiries@hearinglink.org

www.hearinglink.org

The **Your Local Cinema** website has extensive listings of subtitled cinema shows across the country, enabling film fans with hearing loss to enjoy rather than endure cinema: www.yourlocalcinema.com

Disabled Person's Railcard – Hearing aid users are entitled to a Disabled Person's Railcard. With this card you and a travelling partner can get 1/3 off adult rail fares for travel on the National Rail network in Great Britain.

Telephone: 0345 605 0525

Minicom/Textphone: 0345 601 0132

Email: disability@raildeliverygroup.com

www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

Post: Disabled Persons Railcard Office, PO Box 6613,

Arbroath, DD11 9AN

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**Living Well
with Hearing Loss**

Cambridgeshire Hearing Help

You can contact our office between
9.30am and 1.00pm
Monday to Friday
(closed bank holidays)

Telephone: **01223 416141**

Text: **07852 699196**

Email: enquiries@cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk

Office address:

153 St Neots Road
Hardwick
Cambridge
CB23 7QJ

www.cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk

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