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World Hearing Day Transforms Lives In Africa

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Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's Listening for Life Centre marked World Hearing Day today (3 March) by highlighting its contribution to promoting ear and hearing care across the world.

The landmark, hi-tech centre of excellence is home to the Trust's cochlear implant technology which helps transform the lives of patients not just in Bradford but further afield in Africa.

“to hear for life, you need to listen with care”

Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon, Professor Chris Raine MBE, said:

“This year's World Hearing Day theme is 'safe listening' which focuses on the importance of not exposing your ears to loud sounds. If you damage it, you can't get your hearing back.

“The World Health Organisation recently highlighted the increasing number of people living with and at risk of hearing loss, as well as stressing the importance of limiting your exposure to loud sounds.

“This World Hearing Day 2022 it is vital to highlight that “to hear for life, you need to listen with care” which focuses on the importance and means of hearing loss prevention through safe listening.”

Many common causes of hearing loss can be prevented if people limit their exposure to loud sounds.



Audiologists Mwanaisha and Regina with donated equipment

Besides the team's work here in Bradford – they also carry out vital charity work in Malawi where surgeons and audiologists have a long, established history of providing support, equipment and running teaching and educational workshops and procedures for medical and audiology professionals.

Malawi has only two audiology centres in the capital, Lilongwe, and in the country's second largest city, the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital

(QECH) in Blantyre.

Chris continued:

“Malawi has a population of 20 million people but there is only one consultant, two registrars and 40 clinical officers.

“To put that in context, we have 10 consultants for less than one million people and more audiometers at the Listening for Life Centre than they have for the whole of Malawi.

“People have very limited access to ENT and general health care and here in Bradford we want to do all we can to help and to highlight the importance of prevention.

“Malawi is the fourth poorest country in the world and they need our support and my colleagues and I go out on a regular basis to help improve their ENT work.”

Last month, Chris and his wife, Anne, the Ear Trust and the Rotary Club of Bradford West donated 16 boxes of equipment to the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH) in Blantyre.

Donations included audiometers, surgical instruments, tracheostomy tubes, monitor screens, lights, anaesthetic equipment, theatre clothing, cameras, endoscopy and otology equipment, as well as trays and cables.



The boxes were presented to audiologists Regina, from Lilongwe and Mwanaisha, from QECH for use in their respective hospitals.

Regina has returned to Lilongwe where she intends taking her new audiometer to the local orphanage, in nearby Chisomo, to test the children's hearing.

FACTFILE:

- Last year, during the pandemic, the Listening for Life Centre team completed 39 cochlear implant operations on children and adults.
- They also provided audiology and rehabilitation sessions to implanted patients at the centre, in schools and homes.
- There are around 26 professionals on the team ranging from surgeons, audiology scientists, teachers of the deaf, speech and language therapists, rehabilitation support workers, audiology technical officers and administration officers.