

Sponsored: Bristol woman who feared she might lose her sight praises 'life-changing' surgery

Cathy Austin, a lecturer at Bristol University, has had her sight restored after a chance meeting with a Nuffield Health Surgeon



Cathy and Rafik

Advertorial: When Cathy Austin achieved her long-term wish of going to Glastonbury Festival in 2014, the experience was everything she hoped it would be. But it was also tinged with sadness:

the senior university lecturer from Bristol was gradually losing her sight.

"I remember standing there, in a field surrounded by all these incredible sights and sounds, thinking this might be the last time I get to see this," she said.

Cathy had struggled with her sight all her adult life and worn contact lenses since the age of 18 due to chronic myopia - short sightedness - but now, with the onset of cataracts, her career and her quality of life were threatened by deteriorating vision.

Although she visited her optician regularly, she was at serious risk of losing her sight – until she sought help from Nuffield Health Bristol Hospital, The Chesterfield.



Cathy Austin

Cathy said: "I'd been visiting the same optician for more than 20 years and seemed to have exhausted all options to maintain my eyesight. Not only was my short-sightedness so extreme that I was running out of lens options, but the fact I suffered from high myopia – where the globe of the eye is quite big – meant that few surgeons would attempt corrective cataract surgery because it posed such high risk of complications. "We'd got to the point that, if my eyesight continued to deteriorate, my optician advised I might have to give up driving, which of course would have significantly changed my life. As you can imagine,

I was absolutely devastated, as was my family. I'm a very active person; I enjoy running and going to the gym, and travel overseas for work.

"I started to plan a very different life and certainly felt I would need to reconsider working in Bath. All in all, this was a very worrying time for me and my family.

One of the vision issues which also plagued Cathy was a drooping eyelid. During a consultation about this at Nuffield Health, with plastic surgeon Lisa Sacks, Cathy mentioned her grave concern about her sight, which prompted an introduction to Consultant Ophthalmologist Rafik Girgis.

Cathy continued: "I was telling Lisa about my worries and how my optician was not optimistic about the future of my sight, when Lisa said she knew just the person who could help me.

"She jumped up and went straight to see if Rafik could meet with me and that moment was life-changing.

"Rafik is an amazing surgeon and highly skilled in treating complex cases like mine. He immediately put me at ease and reassured me that my condition was treatable. The care and support I received from Rafik, his team and everyone at The Chesterfield, was absolutely wonderful.

"Being treated by Nuffield Health is five star. There's a fantastic atmosphere of caring; you get a private room, which is more like a hotel room than a hospital room, what with its en suite and room service, and you have the reassurance you're being treated by one of the country's top surgeons.

"The operation was so fast, I was in and out of the hospital within a few hours, and by the next morning my sight was better than it had ever been in my life. Now, thanks to Rafik and Nuffield Health, I only need to wear glasses for reading.

"I often think of what would have happened if I hadn't visited The Chesterfield hospital that day. It concerns me that there are people out there like me, not being advised of the treatment I was fortunate enough to receive. I'd urge anyone who is experiencing serious sight problems to seek another opinion."

For more information, visit www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/bristol or call 0117 911 5917.