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# You can see I'm happy with my 'smile transplant'

**SOPHIE GOODCHILD** | Monday 3 June 2013 11:56 BST |  0 comments

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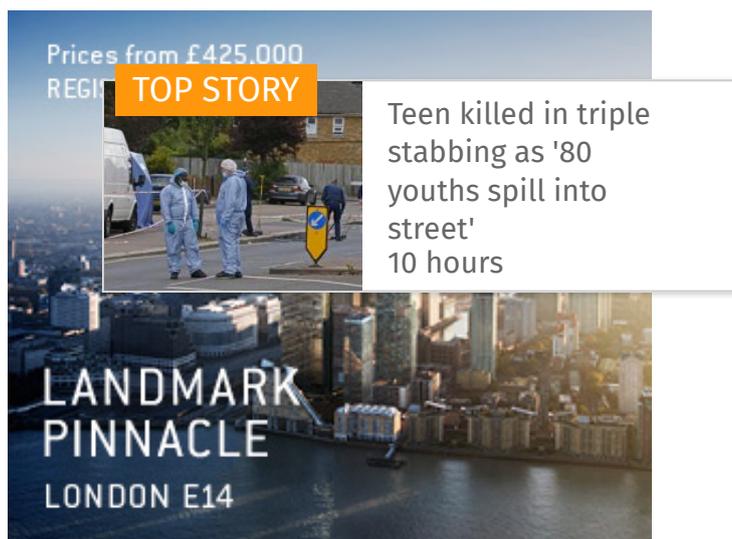


Smiling through: Victoria Howell had a facial muscle transplant which restored her eye and mouth control after facial palsy

## **A woman whose face was left partially paralysed after surgery to remove a tumour can smile again thanks to a pioneering transplant.**

Plastic surgeon Charles Nduka transplanted a muscle from Victoria Howell's temple, restoring her facial symmetry and enabling her to regain control of her left eye and her mouth.

Ms Howell, 27, from Sidcup, struggled with eating, drinking, speaking or showing expression before the procedure. She developed facial palsy, affecting muscles including those needed to smile and to close her left eye, after the benign growth was removed in 2008.



The condition affects thousands of people in the UK and occurs when a nerve in the face is damaged or missing. In Ms Howell's case, the tumour surgery affected the nerve which connects the ear to the brain.

The former photographer, who had physiotherapy after her "smile transplant" in 2011, said: "It took a year after the operation before I felt confident enough to meet new people. I've now got a job in travel recruitment which I really enjoy and I feel confident again."

Mr Nduka, of the Cadogan Clinic in Belgravia, chairs the charity

Facial Palsy UK, set up to raise awareness of the condition and improve quality of care. He said: “A major aim is to highlight to health professionals which patients need specialist treatment, and provide support networks to reduce the sense of isolation patients feel.” ■

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