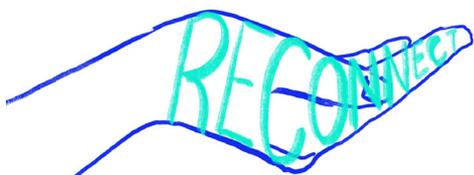


Aphasia Reconnect

Winter Newsletter

January 2021



Support us by donating at:
Phone: 07885 288 943
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Email: info@aphasiareconnect.org
Website: www.aphasiareconnect.org

Welcome to the Aphasia Re-Connect Winter Newsletter!

2020 was a **difficult** year with so many of us locked down for much of this time. The good news is that we have **brought many people** with communication disability together through **Zoom** and other apps. We have offered the opportunity to **connect** with people and have real conversations either in virtual groups or individually through our buddbssystem.

The groups have **grown** in number, with virtual groups by area, **Putney** and **Croydon** for instance, or interest groups, like our **art appreciation, conversation** or **music groups**. Many of the hundred or so buddied in the summer, have gone onto join our virtual groups, achieved once zoom was set up. New groups have burgeoned, and we are all **well connected** as we enter our second lockdown!

Buddy's, offering **one to one support**, still have a place for those new to Aphasia Re-Connect, or indeed where technology is challenging. New buddies and some amazing continuing buddies, have now been joined by **four peer befrienders**, offering the chance to **share experience and empathy**.

The **good news** is that **Aphasia Re-Connect** is alive and running and making a dif-

11

VIRTUAL GROUPS
5 weekly groups, 2 bi-weekly groups and 4 new groups starting in January.

87

VOLUNTEERS
87 volunteers with and without aphasia supporting the work.

23

STUDENTS
on placement from September 2020 to April 2021 who have supported groups and 8 individuals.

34

BUDDIES
We had 34 buddies and 4 peer-befrienders.

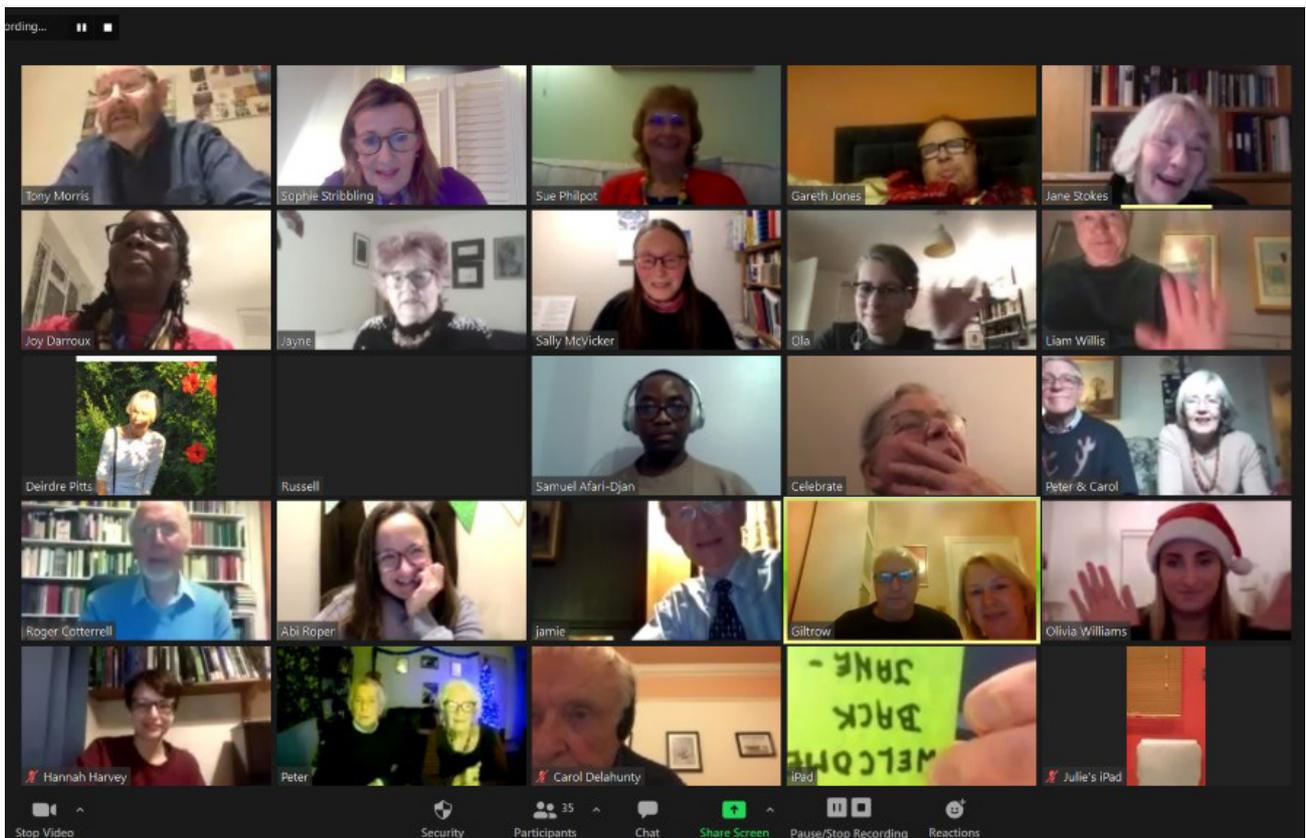
An update from Sally

Over the last six months, we have seen a fantastic number of **students**, who have supported our groups, preparing resources and co-facilitating with our facilitators with aphasia. We have opened a **Starters Group** for those new to Aphasia Re-Connect, who are perhaps a little shy to join a larger group. We have had an exciting **Journal club** that has looked at academic articles on Aphasia. One article on the awareness of aphasia is presented in this journal.

The highlight of our year was our **seasonal celebration**. Attended by some **77 people**. We enjoyed an **art show** by our artists with aphasia. **Poignant readings** by our members. We enjoyed hearing the Cello, piano and singing. For a bit of fun, we had a **quiz** to challenge us at the end. More than anything, it was a **fantastic coming together** of so many. Huge thanks to all those who were involved.

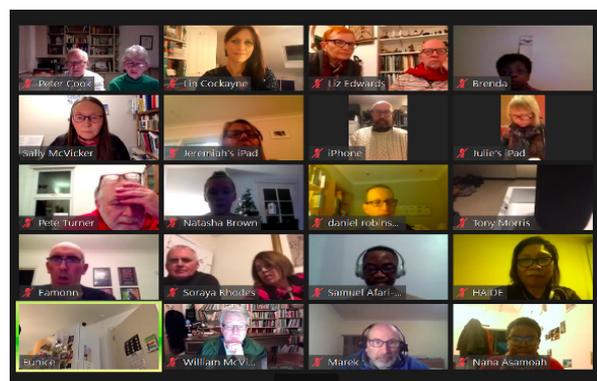


A screen shot of the seasonal celebration. We had 77 attendees! Thank you for coming!

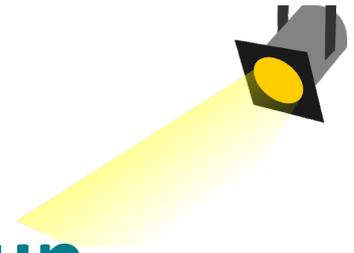


A reading from the evening.

He asks me where it is, and I point upstairs from the nest of my bed. I can picture the place, the door in the hallway, which, when opened, reveals a stack of shelves brimming with towels, linens, pillowcases. "It's in the ...". He stands there looking at me, waiting. "You know, up in the ...". The word won't come to me. I could lead him there and show him; I could describe how to get there, what the place is made of (knob, door, hinges, shelves), but the word for the place has estranged itself.



Spotlight on a group:



Conversation Group

A **lively** and **wholesome** aspect of Aphasia-Reconnect includes the weekly **conversation group**! Every Tuesday morning, members, volunteers, and students come together to socialise in an aphasia-friendly way!



So, how do the conversation groups work?

Each week has a designated topic that the group decides upon - recent **topics** included:

Arts and
craft

Comedy

Movies,
Books and
Music

Technology

We begin each meeting with a **fun quiz** on the topic before moving on to discussions.

We use **breakout rooms**, a function on Zoom to split all members into **smaller groups**.

This allows for less noise interference and more of a chance for members to chime in!

Our lovely students and members put together **aphasia-friendly presentations**. These include pictures, questions, and key-words so that conversation stays focused. We keep it fun! Switching to digital formats can be a challenge so it's important for the conversation groups to maintain a casual, welcoming atmosphere for all to enjoy!

New Groups!

We have 3 new groups starting this January 2021.

Interested?

Call Sally on 07885 288943 or email info@aphasiareconnect.org



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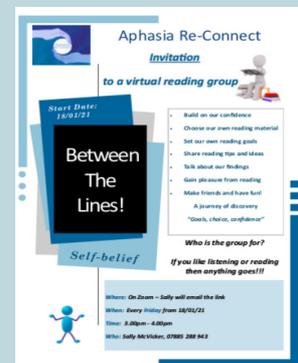
Inspired by Tom, we have a new Photography group starting. This will be online via Zoom. It will be every Monday afternoon at 2pm.

Learn new skills, Share your memories! On Zoom!



2

Inspired by research, we have the development of a new reading group, 'Between the Lines'. This will be co-facilitated by Ginia and Bianca, who have done much of the research behind this.



3

Sophie will be taking a group in the virtual world of Eva Park. This is an exciting new venture where you can carry on your conversations as an avatar!



However, you will need to have good internet (2MB download), a computer and headphones that meets recommended specifications.

Spotlight on a person with Aphasia:



Elliot

My name is Elliot.

I am 39 years old.

I grew up in **London**.

I lived in **Belgium** for a while.

I went to university in **Birmingham**.

I studied **Geography**.

I have two **younger brothers** and a **sister**.

I am **married** with one **daughter**.

I used to work in **Recruitment**.

I lived in **America** for 10 years.

My hobbies and interests include **holidays** and **restaurants** (*and politics, music, films, documentaries*)



My stroke and communication:

I had a stroke in New York **5 years ago**. I was in **hospital** for a **month** at Sinai.

I can **speak, read** and **write** (sometimes).

I find it hard to remember **numbers** and to **read aloud**, and sometimes find it difficult to find the words that I want.

I attend Aphasia Re-Connect's **Young Person's** group.

Life now:

I am living in **London** with my **wife**, my 4-year-old **daughter Lilly**, a **cat** and a **snake**.

I enjoy keeping fit by **rowing, cycling**, and **skipping**.

I also enjoy **cooking** and **exploring London** with my daughter.

The future:

I am planning to start a **coffee business**.

I aim to **move back to New York** one day.

I would also like to get a **dog**.

An article by Basia Grzybowski

Prisons in Borough/Southwark

Marshalsea Prison

The **First** building was built in the **14th** century near **Mermaid Ct**, off Borough High Street.

The second building was built in **1811** near **Angel Lane/Alley** off Borough High Street.

Now used as a **library**.

You can see one of the original walls between the **library** and **St George church garden**.



King Bench Prison

Used from **medieval** times until **1761**, formerly built from two houses in **Angel Place** off Borough High Street.

In **1758** a new building was built near the **crossroad** of **Newington Causeway/Borough Road/ Great Suffolk Street**.

This site is now **Scovell housing estate**.



The Clink Prison

This prison was owned by the **Bishop of Winchester**, in the grounds of **Liberty of the clink**.

Located next to the Bishops' London home **Winchester palace**.

It was used from the **12th century** until **1780**, and is the oldest prison in England, housing men and women.

The **remnants** of the buildings are **now part** of the **Museum in Clink Street**.



An article by Francis Jane Stokes

Volunteering with Aphasia Re-Connect in 2020 – a different year for sure!

I live near **Elephant and Castle** in **South London**, and have worked as a **Speech and Language Therapist** for nearly 40 years. Volunteering with Aphasia Re-Connect seemed an obvious thing to do when I **stopped working full time in 2017**. I have so enjoyed working with new and old friends, through 2018 and 2019 with a particular highlight being the project at **Ark Walworth Academy** in 2019 which many of you will remember.



But then along came **2020**, the **pandemic, lockdown** and huge change to the programmes, projects and groups that Aphasia Re-Connect was running.

Together with others, I set up and **maintained the network** of **phone** and **zoom buddies** for **70** plus people. **Volunteers** and **students** made weekly phone calls to the people who would normally be attending the numerous groups. We also kept a **WhatsApp group** going with cheering **messages, music, thoughts, and jokes**.

It was such a pleasure to see **friendships** and **learning opportunities** grow as students and others made the commitment to contact people with **aphasia** regularly. And to see how people were able to adapt to using zoom, skype, text, whatsapp messages with the patient and expert support of others within the team (thank you Lin, thank you Sophie!)

In the end we were able to provide weekly contact to over **100 people**.

To build rapport with someone you need to dive deep into the activities that are **meaningful** to each of you and from what I was told, there were conversations on how to make the best pilau rice, how to mend china plates, and the best London rap music.

As we move into another year of uncertainty I feel so **lucky** to be part of this **amazing network** of **supporters** and **friends**.

Fun fact: there are actually 2 people called Jane Stokes in Aphasia Re-Connect and we know each other and live close to each other! To avoid confusion I am known as Frances Jane Stokes!

Research project update: an article by Kat Elliot.

How Aphasia Re-Connect impacts people living with Aphasia

I qualified as a **Speech and Language** therapist from City University in 2018, and since then I have worked with **people who have aphasia** and other communication or swallowing difficulties, in the **community**.

At the start of this year I decided to pursue a **research project** to top-up my qualification to an MSc, so I chose to **lead a study** exploring the **impact of Aphasia Re-Connect** for people living with aphasia.

This research aims to **shed some light** on how **Aphasia Re-Connect** supports individuals living with aphasia, and how it could achieve even greater impact.



After many months of planning and gaining ethical approval from the university, I was able to advertise the project to Aphasia Re-Connect members, and recruit people for my study by autumn. In October I was able to **carry out interviews** virtually with **9 volunteering individuals** who generously contributed their views and experiences of aphasia, how they came to be involved with Re-Connect and the impact the organisation has had on them. The interviews have now been transcribed and analysed, and the report is currently in the **process of being written**. A number of interesting themes have arisen from the data. Participants identified **7 key areas of impact brought about Aphasia Re-Connect**, some of which are subthemes: Listed below.

- (1) Social interaction and friendship
- (2) Opportunity to share experience of aphasia
 - Learning to live well with aphasia
- (3) Improved confidence and mental wellbeing
- (4) Feeling all levels of communication are accepted, supported and valued
- (5) Opportunity to practice conversation
- (6) Finding a sense of purpose
 - Adopting a role to help others
 - Maintaining social activity
 - Exposure to new opportunities

These will be **discussed in detail** in my article, along with factors found to contribute to **perceived impact** and the clinical implications this has for **optimising community provision** for people with **aphasia**.

I very much hope this piece of work helps to **draw attention** to the **under-represented voices** of people living with **aphasia**, to ultimately **improve and shape** the services available to them.

I look forward to **sharing my findings** and the final report when it is complete within the next few months.

I'd like to say another **huge thank you** to those that took part in the study and gave their time to me; it was a **humbling and valuable experience** to speak with all of you.

A rehab ward during COVID – Jane’s experience

At the end of October, Jane Stokes sadly had a fall and **fractured her pelvis**. She spent a week in Kings College Hospital before being moved to a **rehabilitation** ward in Brixton where she stayed for **4-5 weeks**.

Jane had a **good experience** in this rehab ward and was well looked after. She described the **staff as wonderful** and was seen by Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and Nurses. The hospital has **nice gardens** that Jane visited with her physio. Jane has developed a soft spot for hospital food!

There were 2 other patients on the ward with Jane who she got to know well. They all had regular **COVID tests**. One of the ladies on Jane’s ward tested positive as she left the rehab ward and so Jane and the other patient had to isolate for 2 weeks. Thankfully, she could still be seen by the team looking after her so it wasn’t too lonely.

In regards to her **aphasia**, Jane managed well and said that some staff are better at understanding than others. She made the point that there has been **huge improvement** in how much people know about the condition, in hospitals at least, compared to around 20 years ago.

Jane returned home in December and is continuing to **recover well at home**.

Tech Tips from Virginia Clark

Aphasia Therapy Online by John Pierce:

It’s completely **free** and **Easy** to use. The menus are very **simple**

It covers **listening, reading, spelling** and **naming**.

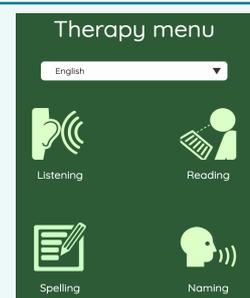
Question and answer sections for **monitoring** your own **progress**.

It includes questions on **sequencing** - e.g. ‘Does Tuesday come before Thursday?’

You can find it here: www.aphasiatherapyonline.com/main.html

If you have any recommendations of useful apps or websites please let us know.

Email: info@aphasiareconnect.org



A tribute to Lin Cockayne as she moves her focus into research and her family

Lin worked at Aphasia Re-Connect for **two years**, during which we saw an amazing development in our work, with a growth in our numbers from 200 to over 350 people living with aphasia.

She brought a **warmth, humour and genuine dedication to our ethos and work**. Overseeing many groups, she brought a **kind listening ear** to many individuals.

Always there with a smile and helping hand on **Thursday Drop ins**; a gentle pace and humour on Wednesdays with the **Putney group**; and co-developer of the **Young person's group**, plus occasional stewardship of **Conversation and Music groups**.

She also worked tirelessly behind the scenes, supporting with IT, systems and processes. She **gave over and above and beyond** and we are **very thankful** for all that she did.



The good news is that Lin will still pop back and **see us as a volunteer**. There is always a place for her, and she is **always welcome**. In the meantime, we send her all our **best wishes and much success** with the research.

Here are just some of the tributes to her:

'I'll miss your sense of humour & I'll miss you'

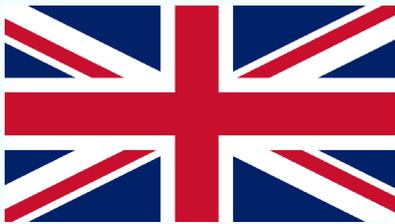
'He has extremely enjoyed the Wednesday sessions and you are always very patient and kind to all.'

'Lin has been amazing, always there, kind, patient, laptop on standby, remembers names, a nice 'can do' attitude.'

Awareness of aphasia research – a summary

Awareness in the UK?

In 2008 – **90%** of people surveyed had **never heard of aphasia**



Of the countries researched, **Croatia** had the **highest number** of people who had heard of **aphasia**.



Slovenia had the **lowest number** of people who had heard of **aphasia**.



People who had heard of **aphasia** were **younger**.



Women had **higher levels** of **awareness** of aphasia than men.

If you would like to read the full research article,

please email Sally: infor@aphasiareconnect.org



This edition of our **newsletter** is **filled** to the brim with **articles**, **news** and **events**. If you would like to **get involved** and **contribute** to **future editions** of our newsletter, **please email Sally**.

You can also reach us via social media:

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info@aphasiareconnect.org

[@Aphasiareconnect1](https://twitter.com/Aphasiareconnect1)



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