

Aphasia Reconnect Summer Newsletter



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15 groups
10 online
4 face to face

80 volunteers
with and without
Aphasia who support
us

26 Students
this summer

33 Buddies
including 4 peer
befrienders



A message from Zoe:



It has been an **exciting** few months!

As well as continuing with all our usual activities, we have embraced some new opportunities:

- A wellbeing workshop – to give us tips and ideas about how to take care of our **mental health**
- A **research event with UCL** about gesture as communication
- And our first ever **Board Game Café campaign** to honour **Aphasia Awareness Month** (June) and to raise funds.

Thank you to everyone who took part in **planning** the campaign, **organising** an event or playing games: Bunting was made, crosswords were completed, coffee and cake consumed, and money raised – to help us to continue our vital work.

A **special shout-out** goes to the **board game companies** who generously donated games for this venture – Coiled Spring, Gamely Games, Asmodee, Ginger Fox and Wild Card Games – Thank you!

I'd also like to thank the **Friends of Aphasia Re-Connect** and our patron, **Nicky Oke** – for the continued time and support they give us. If you are interested in becoming a Friend then please do get in touch (email: info@aphasiareconnect.org or check out our website (Become a Friend – Aphasia Re-Connect (aphasiareconnect.org))

If you have any suggestions or comments then please get in touch – **we'd love to hear from you** - you can use the suggestion boxes at our physical groups or email us at info@aphasiareconnect.org

I left Aphasia Re-Connect in mid September. I wanted to say that it has been an enormous privilege to work alongside our community members. Thank you!

On another note, our Admin, Website and Comms Support, Hannah, sadly left in May.

We are pleased that Valia has taken over this role and appreciate your patience as this transition takes place.



Board Game Café Fundraising Events

By SLT student Lucy Wolfe and volunteer Mandy Nickerson



During **Aphasia Awareness Month (June 2022)**, Board Game Cafés have been held as part of Aphasia Re-Connect's fundraising campaign.

The aims of the campaign included: **raising awareness** of aphasia, **raising funds** to support the work of Aphasia Reconnect and bringing people together to have fun.

Some examples of events held by our members, include:

Final year SLT students took part in a **Board Game Café at City, University of London**. The students played a variety of games, such as Monopoly Deal and Six Second Scribbles.



Group members took part in a **Board Game Café** at the Christchurch Drop-in. Members enjoyed games, including: Randomise, Gin Rummy and Uno.

Between the Lines members enjoyed an online Board Game Café. Members enjoyed games, including: Trivia, Scategories and Boggle.



Mandy

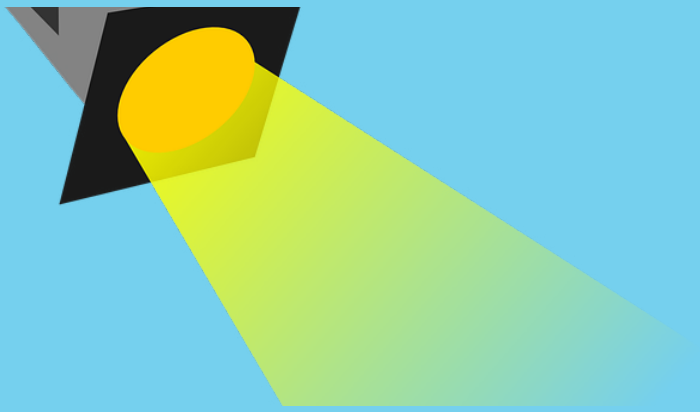
I ran it in my **garden**.

I had 20 friends there and we had three tables running games.

I served cheese, bread, cheesecake and wine.

With this evening and those that were not able to come along I **raised £785** plus what people paid directly online to Aphasia Reconnect.

It was a lovely evening and fortunately a dry evening in terms of weather!



Spotlight on a Volunteer - Alexandra Reece

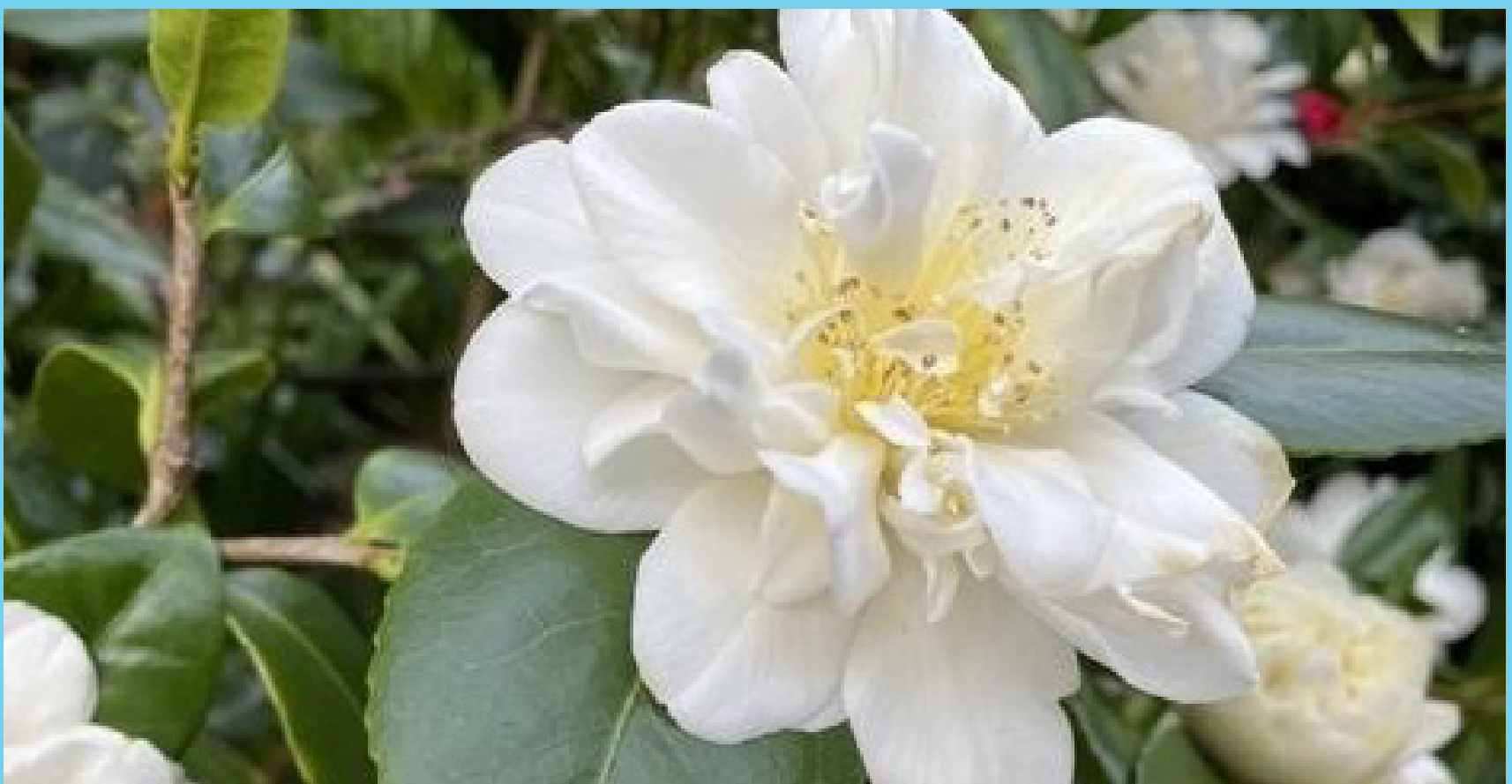
My lovely **Mum** had a **stroke 4 years ago** and was left with **moderate aphasia** aged 75. I learned about Aphasia Reconnect through a fellow City Student last summer (I'm currently retraining to be a Speech and Language Therapist. She explained that the organisation **needed volunteers** to help run **online** clubs, especially **out of term time**.

I was keen to help and **understand** how Aphasia Reconnect **supports individuals** with aphasia, so I got in touch and was given an **interview and training** by Sophie & Sally before I could start my volunteering journey. I have continued to support **weekly online sessions**: starting with the reading group and now the music group during my university holidays.

With a time commitment of 3 hours each week, my **volunteering experience** has introduced me to many different people and helped me develop a multitude of skills.

Aphasia Reconnect is based on **research** and the **experiences of real people** with aphasia. They have regular review meetings to keep the sessions' content and delivery **aphasia friendly** for the users. The sessions are run with great **energy** and **enthusiasm**, and the positive impact this has on the attendees is tangible, giving me great **satisfaction** to help in a small way.

Through my volunteering with Aphasia Reconnect, I have observed how different **communication strategies work** and how **effective** they can be; I even now use some with **my Mum!** There is an **emerging awareness** of aphasia and its impact on individuals going through this journey. I hope to **continue volunteering** with Aphasia Reconnect and help spread about aphasia and its impact on those who live with it.



A Spotlight on a Member

An article by George Morrison

George wrote a longer article for the metro, read the full article here, by clicking the link.

<https://metro.co.uk/2022/05/20/like-bruce-willis-i-have-aphasia-it-takes-over-your-life-16503278/>

Like Bruce Willis, I have aphasia- it takes over your life

I was **36** years old when my stroke happened.

I was otherwise healthy but in February 2017, I developed a **sudden headache**. 5 days later I had a **severe stroke** caused by a blood vessel in my neck collapsing.

I **could not get my words out**, move or do anything. I was **very confused**.

In the Intensive Care Unit the doctor asked me to **write my name and I could not**.

My partner was told that I had a **language disorder called aphasia**.

I was in hospital for six months, receiving treatment for walking, balance and for my arm. It was hard.

My aphasia was terrible but it is **slowly getting better**.

I went back to work as a **corporate PR** but unfortunately, I had to medically retire after nine months, as I realised, I **could no longer do my job**. This has **completely** changed my life.

When I found out that Bruce Willis was **retiring from acting due to aphasia**, I felt **immensely sorry** for him, his kids, wife, and friends.

I know exactly what he must be feeling.

To Bruce Willis I say: **Keep going. Set yourself goals**. Surround yourself with **positive and patient people**. **You will get there**.

Since my diagnosis I have discovered aphasia groups, including **Aphasia Re-Connect and iCafe**. I love these groups, especially **talking with other aphasia sufferers and making friends**.

I am currently volunteering for **Wheels for Well-being**, which supports disabled people to **enjoy cycling**. My friends have bought me a **trike** and I enjoy using it.

I don't know why the stroke happened to me.

I have bad days, but my partner and friends have been so **supportive**.

My partner is **fantastic**.

I am **positive about my future**.



A Poem entitled *'Catch the Hollow Moon.'*

written by Coral Luke, 21st June 2022.

Catch the Hollow Moon

From my attic window I see the perfect moon.
 She is round and white, clear, and bright,
 She protects me through the enduring night.
 I watch her rise at evening time from her daily rest meridional.



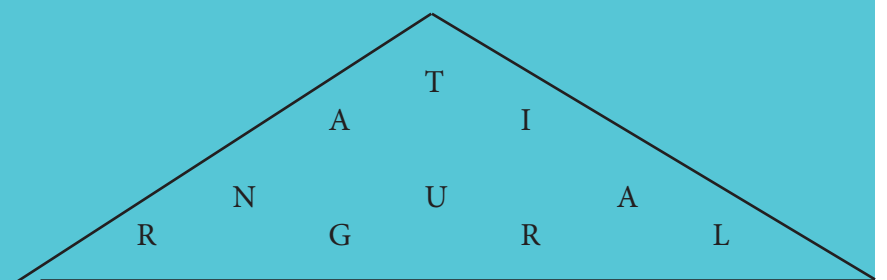
Her luminosity shines constant, through my skylight
 Undimmed she casts light coloured shadows behind the furniture.
 I awake as light filters through the unobscured windowpane,
 I watch as my hollow moon slowly and purposefully sinks back to her daily rest.

My hollow moon. The orb of night, my muse of the witching hour.
 Her ethereal beauty, her gossamer brilliance assuages my disarranged mind.
 Her ability to metamorphoses into various shapes stirs my mindset
 I want to capture my hollow moon, to steal inside and travel the sky.



Psst....Talking about being good with words... can you solve our puzzle?

(Answers on the last page)



In this fun new word game, you must face two challenges:

Spell 4-letter words that use one letter from each row. You may use the letters in any order. Score 1 point for each 4-letter word you form.

Spell one 10-letter word that begins with the top letter in the triangle and uses every letter in the triangle. Score 5 points for this word.

An Article by Basia Grzybowska Blackfriars Bridge



Ever noticed these **red pillars** in the Thames between **Blackfriars Road Bridge** and **Blackfriars Railway Bridge**? They formed part of the **original railway bridge**, build at this point across the Thames in **1864**.

In 1985, the **old bridge was declared too weak** to support **modern trains** and was removed – but the supports were left. They were used as a **platform for equipment** in the recent rebuilding of Blackfriars station. The **third pillar** in each row was absorbed into **supporting** the new bridge when it was built.

Blackfriars Bridge gets the name of one the **Dominican priories**. There were 3 priories north of the Thames- **Whitefriars, Greyfriars** and **Blackfriars**. There was no Farringdon Road, just a river.

The **River Fleet** is the largest of London **subterranean rivers**. Its headwater are two streams on Hampstead Heath, each of which was dammed into a series of ponds- the **Hampstead ponds** and the **Highgate ponds** – in the 18th century. In wet weather and on a very low tide, the **murky Fleet** can be seen **gushing into the Thames** under Blackfriars Bridge.

From 1221 to 1538 the **Blackfriars Monastery** was located on the riverside. It was a wealthy and influential institution, and its halls were often used for **government council meetings**. The Parliament met there a few years before the start if the **Wars of the Roses**. After **Dissolution of the monasteries** in the 16th century, the sit held the **Blackfriars Playhouse**. The area become a fashionable residential district in the early 17th century.





Spotlight on Ark Walworth Academy Visit



An article by Lucy Wolfe, Student Speech and Language Therapist

On Monday 27th June, **group members** and **speech and language therapy students** visited **Ark Walworth Academy** to spend the day with **21 lower sixth form students** to **inform them about and raise their awareness of aphasia.**

The day's activities, included:

- Training on Stroke and Aphasia,
- Conversations and training with group members,
- Finding out about speech therapy from the SLT students,
- Poster making,
- Student presentations, and Lots of fun and games!
- Thank you to all our members for making the day such an enormous success!

Here are some soundbites from the year 12 students at Walworth Ark Academy.

“So exciting to learn how to support communication and stroke patients”

“Really good and it was comfortable to communicate with different people and to get a better understanding of aphasia”

“Very insightful and informative...so much learnt about aphasia “

Here are some quotes from their Teachers.

“Wonderful - students engaged”

“A masterstroke to get the SLT students to deliver on careers (in healthcare)”



Tech Advice by Jayne

How to get Watsapp on your Android phone

To start, **turn on** your phone.

Step 1. Find the **Play Store app**.

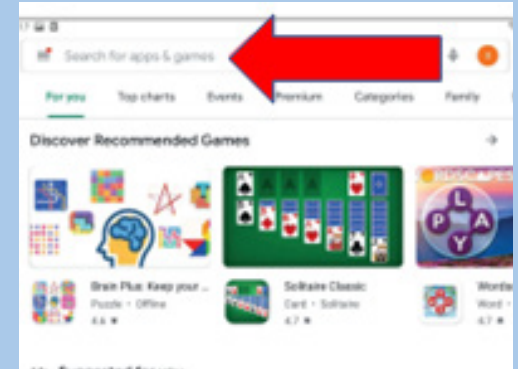
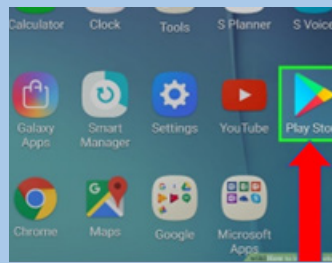
The icon for the Play Store is a blue, red, and yellow triangle with the tip pointing to the right.

Go to the **Home screen**

Swipe **up** to show the apps

Swipe to the **left** to scroll through your apps

Open the Play Store app



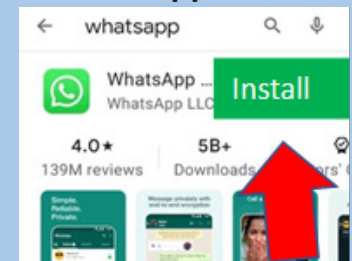
Step 2. At the top of the screen on the Play Store it says **“Search for apps & games”**

Tap here and type **“WhatsApp”**

Step 3. You should get this screen, with a **green icon with a white phone in a speech bubble for WhatsApp**.

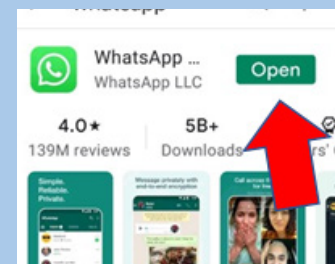
Tap on **Install**

You may need to enter your **Play Store password** to do this



Step 4. When it has **finished installing**, the screen will look the same, but the button on the right will **change from Install to Open**.

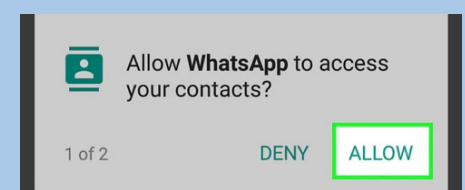
Tap on **Open**



Step 5. When WhatsApp opens, a box will appear to ask if you want to **Allow WhatsApp to access your contacts**.

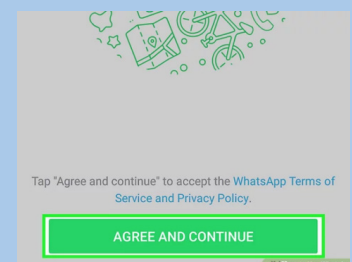
This lets you **find people you already know** on WhatsApp.

Tap on **Allow**.

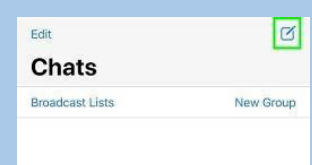


Step 6. Tap on **Agree and Continue** (green bar at the bottom of the screen) to **finish**.

You will now be able to find the WhatsApp icon on your Home screen.

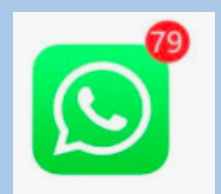


Use the icon in the top right corner of the screen to start a new conversation with one of your contacts.



A small red circle will appear on the icon if someone has sent you a message

Join the Aphasia Re-Connect WhatsApp group!



We have a group chat for members. Contact Sally with your phone number if you would like to join!

Student Testimonials

“I have really enjoyed being on placement with Aphasia Reconnect, the group is so warm and friendly.”

Sophie Silber

“During my time at Aphasia Reconnect I have learnt so much from all the group members. Thank you to every-one for making my time so enjoyable. “

Lucy Wolfe



“My journey with *Aphasia Reconnect* has been quite a learning experience especially improving my confidence and social skills.”

Zarmeena Rahani

“I’ve had so many memorable conversations and discussions during this placement about aphasia, art, books and much much more! Thanks to everyone at Aphasia Re-Connect for sharing your experiences, skills and interests.”

Alison Wood

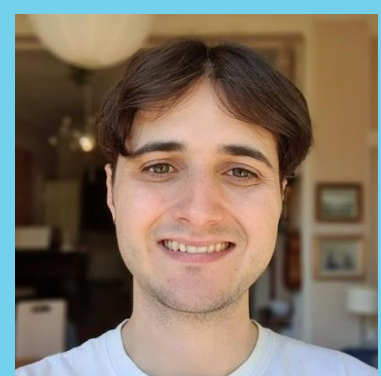


“There have been plenty of highlights this term. Our student project making the Cookbook has been, by far, my favourite. I have learnt so much from everyone and I am so grateful for their kindness and wise words. Thank you for making us students feel so welcome!”

Kathryn McDonald



“My placement at Aphasia Re-Connect provided a fantastic opportunity to meet lots of interesting people with aphasia and learn about the different ways that life continues after stroke or brain injury. I have really enjoyed reading Oscar Wilde with the Between the Lines group and exploring barriers and facilitators to access to work as part of our student project.” – **Oisin Twomey Brenner**





The original idea for a cooking club came from a casual conversation at the **Blackfriars drop-in** in January 2020. Well, we all know what happened next!

The idea was revived at the **Training and Activities meeting** in March this year. During our many conversations while in lockdown, the one topic which seems to **ignite our communal interests was food**. Food around the **world**, food in the **past** and in **different cultures**, as well as the more mundane, 'what are we having for supper today'.

The idea of having a cookery club, hosted by the students, was greeted with enthusiasm. We met a Senior Occupational Therapist to discuss our responsibilities for this club to go ahead such as safety precautions to be taken and any adaptations needed.

The idea was to **compile an Aphasia friendly cookbook**, with a **fund-raising potential**. We have not progressed to this yet, but the **members have shared some delicious recipes**, all of which have been recorded by the **wonderful students** to share for future use. We have looked at many types of diets; **vegan, vegetarian, pescatarian**, and not forgetting the **meat eaters** in our groups.

We try to think of **keeping within the budget** for the cost in an era of rapidly rising prices. Many of the recipes can be **adapted according to taste** and according to the **number of portions**. One of members think that any recipe can be improved by a good slug of Spanish **brandy!**

On a more serious note, for some members, **cooking can be a challenge**; for wheelchair users, those who find standing for too long tricky, and those who have a weak dominant hand. **But everyone is very resilient**, not thinking too much about problems but **coming up with ever-more ingenious solutions** – such as cracking an egg one-handed (with a great demonstration by one of the members), using a **non-slip mat, a clamp** to use when cutting or slicing and so much more. We have looked at the various gadgets in making cooking a lot easier and as well as their prices and availability.

In the future we hope to **meet face-to-face** and **taste some of our recipes** but, in the meantime if you get an invitation to join the **Cookbook Club on zoom**, please join us; you will be assured of a **warm welcome** and **lots of laughs** along the way.

If you would like further information, please get in touch with Sally McVicker, her email address is: sally@aphasiareconnect.org.

Summer Party

We celebrated **summer on 14 th July** at Christ Church Southwark.

We were **delighted** to see so many **group members** and **supporters** on one of the hottest days of the year!

We had several revered guests, introduced by our patron **Nikki**. One was **gymnast and Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist Steve Frew**, who performed a handstand for **Aphasia!**

There was food, music, a raffle and a quiz. Over **£150 was raised** from cash and online donations. Thank you!



This **newsletter** is **jam-packed** with interesting news and content, **thank you so much** to those people who took the **time** to contribute.

If **you would like to contribute**, please get in contact, we would love to hear from you!

Email: info@aphasiareconnect.org

If you can, please continue to support Aphasia reconnect!

You can support us by donating at

www.aphasiareconnect.org/support-us

You can also reach us by social media

<https://www.facebook.com/reconnec1>

www.aphasiareconnect.org

<https://twitter.com/@Aphasiareconne1>.



Psst... Where you curious about the word game, underneath Coral's beautiful poem?.... Here are the answers....

4-letter words, for 7 points: gait, gnat, lint, rant, tail, tang, tarn

The 10-letter word beginning with T is TRIANGULAR, for 5 points.

Max Points: 21 points.

