

Aphasia Re-Connect

Spring Newsletter – April 2025



**Members at The
National Portrait
Gallery Visit**

**Basia's Cherry
Blossoms**



Welcome to the Aphasia Re-Connect Spring Newsletter!

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The Southbank – By Bill

When I go to **London**, I usually visit the **Southbank**, I walk along the **Thames**, and visit one or more **Art galleries** or **Theatres**, notably the **Tate Modern** and the **National Theatre**.

The **Tate Modern** usually has an **exhibition** worth visiting! It is **free** to visit!

On display are **paintings**, **sculptures**, and **large-scale installations** by artists **worldwide**, including **Pablo Picasso**, **Yayoi Kusama**, and **Henri Matisse**.

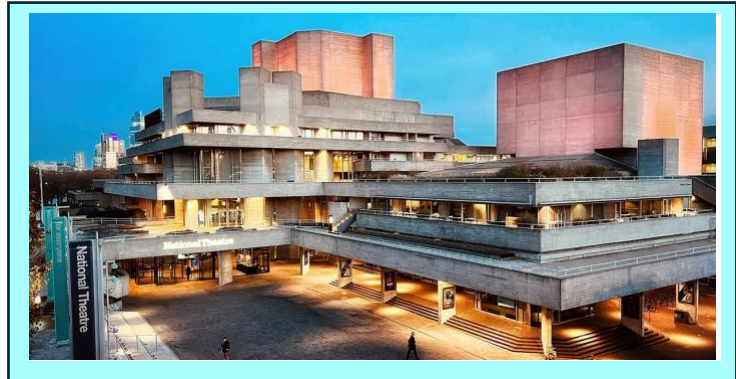
The **iconic Turbine Hall** has **live performances** and **video displays**. This is next to the underground **Tanks**.



The **National Theatre** has **three Theatres** in total. It is **not free!** - from £20 up to £99!

1. **Olivier Theatre**
2. **Lyttelton Theatre**
3. **Dorfman Theatre.**

The **National Theatre** aims to **spark imagination** and **bring people together** through **theatre**. It uses **creativity** and **expertise** to **entertain**, **inspire**, and **connect audiences worldwide**.



Another option... **National Theatre at Home!**

If there is anyone who **lives too far away**, **National Theatre** have the **option to watch from home!** For example: **“Frankenstein”**, **“Oliver Twist”**, **“The Grapes of Wrath”**, **“The Boy With two Hearts”** etc.

Much **lower price! £9.99 per month!** Or you can **pay for a specific performance**.

National Theatre at Home link:

www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/national-theatre-online/

My 25th Anniversary – By Basia

Vintage!

25 years ago, I had an **aneurysm** that **burst**. I had a **weird ringing** in my **brain**, like a **church bell**.

My **husband rang** for an **ambulance**. They came **straight away**, the **bleeding** was **quite slow**, my talking didn't change right away.

Luckily, my **children** were at their **grandparents'** house, as it was **half term**!

I had a **scan straight away** and I was sent to the **Royal Free hospital**. They **couldn't operate** on me **straight away** - the **bleeding had to stop**. I had an **operation** to **clip the artery** six days later.

I was in **hospital** for **six weeks**, I **couldn't speak**, I was **very low**; I **felt like my life was over**, I **couldn't work**, my **children couldn't speak to me**, only my husband. **Social life over**.

I felt like I was **saved** because I saw a **Speech and Language Therapist** twice a week. **Every time** I went to see the **therapist** I **cried**.

I also had an **au-pair**. He was **learning English**, like I had to **again**, so we **practiced every day together**.

Luckily, my **Speech and Language Therapist** sent me to a **new charity, Connect**. They had a **counsellor who had aphasia too** and it **really helped a lot**. This charity **helped me** to get **more confident** and gave me **more conversation opportunities** because it was made up of **other people like me**.

For **16 years** I facilitated **drop-in, women's group**, and the **newsletter**.

I trained **professional people** (doctors, nurses, care workers) and supported **research** from **different institutes**.

The charity had a **head office** and **lots of staff**, its focus was on **education, research** and **rehabilitation**. It was **too much** and **Connect** sadly collapsed.

Luckily, through **Sally McVicker**, a **new charity** was born - **Aphasia Re-Connect**.

I was **involved straight away**.

I'm sure **25 years ago** if I **did not have that au-pair, Speech and Language Therapist, Counsellor or Connect** straight away **my life would be completely different**, I would be in a **bad way**.



Then & Now

Spotlight on a Member - Nadia

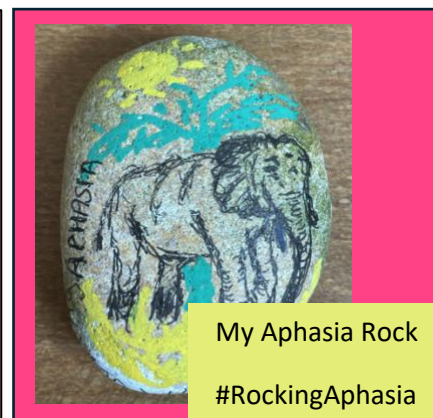
A bit about who I am...

- I was born in Ladysmith, **South Africa**.
- In Africa I made and sold custom **artwork**.
- I moved to **England** for the **work opportunities**.
- From 2003 – 2018 I worked as a **live-in carer** for people with **dementia**.
- I have **travelled** to many different countries including **Africa, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, and Columbia**.



My family

- I have a **son** who lives in **Columbia** and a **daughter** who lives in **Crystal Palace**.
- My **Dad** was from **Naples** and my **Mum** is from **Rome**.
- My **Mum** now lives in **South Africa** (Ladysmith) and my **auntie** lives in Italy (Rome).



When I had my stroke... 2018

- I was at **work** in **Guildford** when it happened. It was **9pm...** I **didn't get help** until **10am the next day** when my client's friend **found me** and **called an ambulance**.
- I was **due to travel to Italy** the **next week** and I was due to **visit my Mum** in Africa for **6 months** (with a **surprise visit to Australia!**).
- I was in **hospital** for a **few days** in **Guildford** before moving to **Croydon hospital** to be **nearer my daughter**. My stay here was **3 months**.
- **After my hospital stay**, I had **support** from **2 Speech and Language Therapists** for **11 weeks**.
- I **finally visited Africa** again in **Jan 2020** but **go stuck there** for **11 months** due to **Covid!**

Spotlight on a Member – Nadia

My experience of Aphasia

Things that have changed...

- **Italian** is my **first language**, since my stroke I **struggle** speaking in **Italian**.
- Most of my **family only speak Italian** so this can be **difficult** for us.
- Sometimes **finding the word** I want to say.
- I can say most **numbers**, but number six and seven I find difficult.
- I have **good memory for dates** but find them **easier to write than say**.
- I am a good reader but **reading aloud** is tricky.

It is helpful to...

- **Write things down**
- Use my **phone** to **read aloud Italian messages**.
Also using **videochat!**
- Using **pictures** and images.

Aphasia Re-connect: *how they have helped me.*

I go to **lots of groups** run by Aphasia Re-Connect.

- **Tuesday**: I've started going to **Bromley drop-in**.
- **Wednesday**: I go to the Re-Connect at City.
- **Thursday**: I go to the **Southwark drop-in** every week. This is my **favourite group** as we always find **topics to connect over** and have a **good chat!**
- **Friday**: Sometimes I go to the online **music group**. In the afternoon, I go to the Croydon drop-in group.

These groups are **very important to me**.

I feel **supported** from all the **staff, members, volunteers, and students**.

I also help them!

Quotes from recent group feedback:

"I like when we are **encouraged** to **give our opinions**. I **really enjoy** the group."

"**Very good group!**"

"I **love** the group and the format is **excellent**."

Spotlight on a Group – North London

We are **delighted** to **announce** that the **North London Group** opened on the **3rd February 2025**.

Supported by our lovely **BSc3 students, Iman and Rina**,
and our fabulous **co-facilitators Basia, Zita, and Dinah**,
the group has got off to a **good start**.



The Group meets at:

📍 **Shaftesbury Hall,**

Herbert Road, Bounds Green, N11 2QN

🕒 **1.30pm to 3 pm**

Continuing **every other Monday** from 28th April

Spotlight on a Volunteer – Corinna



Hi everyone!

It's **fantastic** to be **introduced** to the **wider Aphasia Re-Connect community**.

My name is **Corinna** and, for **over a year**, I have **volunteered weekly** at **Aphasia Re-Connect's Music group**.

What does my role involve?

- Firstly, I **present the music choices**, submitted by members, to the whole group.
- I **take each member's vote**, which dictates the order in which they're played.
- **We then listen to the music**, two at a time!
- Usually, the **music video is played** so members can **enjoy the visuals as well as the audio**.
- Everyone is **put into smaller breakout rooms** after every two songs.

- My role also includes **facilitating my assigned room**.
- Individuals in the room would have scored the two songs (out of 10), so I **note down the scores and work out the average**.
- We then all **discuss what we like and didn't like** about what was played – sometimes the conversations can get quite heated!

Why do I volunteer?

- Participating in the music group each Friday is a **fun way to start the weekend**. I have loved **getting to know the group's members and co facilitators** – everyone always has **interesting stories** to tell.
- Each week we **play a huge variety of music**. We all have such **different tastes**, so I **learn something new each time**.
- I have also had the opportunity to **understand more about Aphasia** and Aphasia Re-Connect's **important work in supporting people with the condition**.

Spotlight on a Volunteer– By Corinna

My background and where I am heading

- Currently, I work in **marketing** and **run campaigns for events within the media industry**. In September I will be **starting a masters in Speech and Language Therapy at University College London**.
- I'm looking forward to exploring how I, as a future therapist, can **help children and adults** with their **speech, language, and communication difficulties**.
- In the meantime, I'll be joining as many music groups as I can!

Volunteer with Us – Make a Difference for People with Aphasia!

Our groups **can't run without volunteers**, we're looking for **enthusiastic volunteers** to help run our **communication support groups** for people with aphasia.

Just **2 hours a week** can make a **huge impact!**

You'll support **group discussions**, **help people communicate** using a **range of techniques**, and work alongside our **amazing peer facilitators**.

📍 **Locations:** Across **London** and **online**

📅 **Flexible commitment** when groups are running

🧠 **Training and support** provided

★ **Interested?**

👋 **Join us today!** Email: info@aphasiareconnect.org to find out more.



Visit to the National Portrait Gallery – By Ginia



I arrived early so I had the **chance to admire** again Tracy Emin's **magnificent bronze doors** depicting 'Everywoman' and **echoing Ghierti's bronze doors** at **Florence Cathedral Baptistry**.

The **group, led by Alison**, gathered in the **new atrium** which was **light and airy**; **friendly staff greeted us** and asked us what we wanted to see. We started at the top of the Gallery.

The **portraits of the Tudor monarchs** have been **rearranged** and **re-labelled** to highlight **themes like *Women in Power***.

From there, we **dropped down a floor** and wandered through **galleries** filled with **formal, meticulously painted 18th-century portraits**—**aristocrats** posed with their **wives, children, servants, and dogs**, all designed to showcase their **wealth and status**.

Some of us were **reminded of the portraits** we had seen at the **Wallace Collection before Christmas**.

Then, in **contrast**, we looked at **self-portraits by artists**—it's interesting how many choose to **paint themselves**.

The austere portrait of **Barbara Hepworth** holding a block of stone, the flamboyant **Mirror, Mirror** by **Doris Zinkeisen** in full makeup, **Sir Joshua Reynolds** gazing into the distance, and the more abstract portrayal by **Frank Auerbach**—we all had our **favourites**, so many **different styles**!

We **couldn't leave** without seeing **portraits of celebrities**.

It was **fascinating** to see how **photographs** and **digital images** were used—from a video of a sleeping **David Beckham** to a life-size pastel of **Judi Dench** and, a group favourite, a hologram of the late **Queen**.

There was **so much more to explore**, but time was up, leaving us with **plenty to reflect on**.

Online Art Workshop – By Ginia

Two weeks later, we had a wonderful **online session** led by **Alison** and **two students**.

It was **inclusive**—those who hadn't visited the gallery got an **overview** with pictures of the portraits, **sparking great conversation**.

It was lovely to see some of our **new starters** joining in.

Alison, *as always*, sent us some **resources**, and we had fun **layering our portraits** with **unpredictable** and sometimes **humorous results**.

We were also joined by **Belinda**, the **gallery's accessibility officer**, who **listened** to our **discussion** and **feedback**.

We all appreciated the **friendly, welcoming**, and **approachable staff**. Some found the **lifts** a bit **confusing** and felt the **picture labels** could **use larger print**, but **overall**, it was a **fantastic experience**.

The **session flew by** and left us **wanting more!**


A **big thank you** to **Alison, Sarah** and **Adeeba** who made this **all possible**.


Next Sessions: **Myth – Exhibition and Workshop**

Roman artefacts and Jonathan Baddock's **immersive installation** of **sculpture, textile** and **sound** to explore myths & rituals.

Exhibition visit:

 **Thursday 24th April 2025**


 **London Mithraeum, 12 Walbrook, EC4N 8AA**

 **2pm to 3.30pm**

Online:

 **Thursday 8th May 2025**

 **Zoom**

 **11am to 12.30pm**

Our art workshops are **free** to our **members**, please consider **donating** to **support** the running of these sessions.



To find out more

Email: alison@aphasiareconnect.org

Student Reflections

"My time at **Aphasia Re-Connect** was a **wonderful experience**. At first it was **daunting** carrying out **assessments** and **working with the clients** initially. However, placement **challenged me to apply my theory to develop my clinical skills**.

I **loved** interacting with **people who have aphasia** and their **carers**.

Reading about aphasia is **theoretical knowledge**. However, **working with people who have aphasia** sheds light on their **language difficulties** such as: **reading, speaking, listening, writing**.

I **enjoyed** being given some measure of **autonomy to work independently** with clients to carry out **evidence-based intervention** with them. I also looked forward to meeting with my **practice educator** and **other speech and language therapy students** to discuss our cases at the end of the day."



Kimberly

"Working with **Aphasia Re-Connect** has been a **very formative** and **valuable experience** for me. I have met **so many brilliant, interesting people** who have been **so warm and welcoming** and from whom I have **learnt so much**.

A **special shoutout** is in order for the **Art and Photography group** who have made **cold, wet and wintery Monday mornings** that **little bit brighter!**

Thank you for all the **laughter** and the **knowledge** and for **teaching me the power of a good conversation.**"



Lily

RIP notice

Colin R



Colin's carers wrote to us:

"I want to **sincerely thank you** for including Colin in your aphasia group – he **truly enjoyed being a part of it**, and it was one of the **highlights of his week.**"

See the difference your donation can make.

Every pound goes **directly** toward funding **vital support** for people with aphasia — here's what your gift could do:

£550 funds **10** music group sessions





£250 funds **a term** of journal club and produces **bespoke** communication aids

£400 funds **a full round** of our Starters Group for new members

£80 supports **volunteer training**

Upcoming Events:

May:

-  Saturday 24th May
-  Sponsored Walk
-  Hyde Park – London
-  Contact Sally@aphasiareconnect.org to join

June:

-  Rocking Aphasia – Aphasia Awareness Month



SCAN me to DONATE



Where to find us:

Website: <https://aphasiareconnect.org>

X (formerly Twitter): @Aphasiareconnec1

Facebook: www.facebook.com/reconnec1

Instagram: @aphasiareconnect



Game: Anagrams

Aha! Sip

Cheeps

A nag glue

Iconic mountain