



Aphasia
Re-Connect

Journal Club

Why Are Community Aphasia Groups Important?

- Helps people to **connect with others** who understand aphasia (i.e. feeling understood)
- Practice communication- safe environment
- Supports **confidence** and **wellbeing**- mental health and community
- They're not just about talking- they're about belonging, learning and being heard.

Research Article:

What really matters to people with aphasia when it comes to group work? A qualitative investigation of factors impacting participation and integration - (Lanyon, L., Worrall, L. and Rose, M., 2018)

- This study explores what **helps** and **hinders** people with aphasia **to participate in and feel integrated** within community aphasia groups
- Small study of 22 participants, including **long term members** and **people who have** left aphasia groups.

Background information:

- There is strong evidence that shows community-based aphasia groups provide **valuable support, communication and education opportunities**
- There are not enough groups to meet current demand
- Some health and support groups fail to meet members' needs, leading to **frustration** or **feelings of exclusion**

Key Findings:

- 1. Balanced conversations** – everyone gets a chance to talk
- 2. An open, friendly and equal group** – not 'Teacher vs student'
- 3. Building communication awareness amongst members**
- 4. Topics and activities are meaningful and fun** – things matter
- 5. Structure and routine** – know what to expect
- 6. Groups being at the right size** – supports joining in
- 7. The facilitators facilitate- not control** – everyone has a chance to lead

Results In:

- More confidence
- More inclusion
- Feeling more able to communicate
- Feeling more connected to others

1. Balanced Interactional Patterns

Groups that supported **turn-taking**, gave time to respond, avoided domination of a few voices were best

- Question: **What helps you join the conversation?**

2.An Open and Equal Group Environment

Positive group experiences were linked to groups being described as **'open'** and **'free'**

Question:

What could facilitators do to make you feel equal?

3. Building communication awareness amongst members

Members find it helpful when peers (and facilitators) **understand aphasia** and use **supportive strategies**

This leads to **respectful, effective interactions** and increases participation.

Question:

How do you let others know you want to speak?

4. Generating Meaningful Objectives and Activities

Activities that had **meaning**, relevant and interesting to members encouraged **engagement** and a sense of contribution.

General discussions of 'life sharing' were highly valued

Activities such as 'talk about your weekend' were not well received and felt artificial

Question:

Are there things you would like to do more of?

5. Ritual and Structure

Predictable routines created a 'safe' environment for communication (welcomes, sharing time, coffee breaks)

Rituals are especially important for welcoming new members, adding a sense of belonging.

Repeated opportunities can lead to **group cohesion** and give members the chance to share and learn about each other over time.

Question: **Do you think it is helpful when sessions follow the same structure each week. Why?**

6. Composition and Group Size



Group composition impacts participation – mixed ability groups were most popular



Mild aphasia vs severe aphasia – getting the right balance



Small groups vs large groups – facilitating intimacy and group identity

7. Group Leadership

Leaders can help shape group culture by:

- Knowing when to **step back** or **intervene**
- Participating as a **peer**

(sharing personal stories, actively listening)

- Promoting a **relaxed, unthreatening environment**

Types of Questions

Topic area	Example question
Experience of the community aphasia group	Tell me about the group. What was the group like?
Content of the group	What did you do in the group?
Group functions	How did these things happen in the group? What helped/didn't help?
Group change	What would you change/add/remove in the group?

Conclusions and Implications

- Community aphasia groups promote social inclusion, meaning, competence and autonomy when well designed
- Peer communication, shared roles and member input were seen as most helpful
- Barriers can be adjusted to improve participation, through feedback and what participants want

Any Room for Improvement?



Does everyone get enough time to talk?



Roles in the groups?



Are topics meaningful for everyone?



Are skills learnt here useful in daily life?