

Young Persons' Aphasia Project – Final Report

Grant applicants: Emma Gale SLT and Richard Jefferson OT

Aims

INS is a charity supporting people with neurological conditions in Richmond and Hounslow.

This project consisted of an 8 week pilot group for younger (18 – 60 years) people with aphasia, a cohort traditionally not well served by Speech and Language Therapy group resources, which tend to focus on older service users in line with stroke prevalence data.

The group focussed on peer support, sharing experiences/ideas, social interaction, raising awareness of aphasia, and shaping future groups or projects.

Method

8 weekly 1.5 hour sessions were held, facilitated by a Speech and Language Therapist and an Occupational Therapist. 12 people with aphasia attended. Aphasia presentation varied widely, but all participants were able to follow basic conversation, and had some method of expression (single word utterances, writing etc). Although we planned to split into 2 smaller groups to facilitate meaningful discussion, overall members preferred to remain in the larger group.

Topics included: neurology and stroke information; parenting issues; return to work and meaningful occupation; friendships and relationships; aphasia awareness. Each member was given a folder of supportive materials to facilitate discussion each week.

Outcomes and Feedback

Feedback forms combined visual analogue scales and free text. 5 feedback forms were returned.

- How much did you learn about stroke and aphasia in the group? Average score 8.8/10

‘I learnt new information’, ‘Thumbs up’, ‘Much more to learn’

- How useful was it to met other younger people with stroke and aphasia? Average score 9.6/10

‘Plenty of stories’, ‘Different opinions’, ‘A lot. Because interesting, learned about a lot’,

- Other comments: ‘Aphasia – more information’, ‘You’ve got to have a reason to learn about it’
- 4/5 respondents expressed a wish for a regular ongoing group

- 3/5 wanted ongoing occasional meet-ups
- 4/5 wanted to be involved in making a resource to educate people about aphasia
- 3/5 wanted more support around getting back to work

The predominant theme was lack of awareness about aphasia – by society, by family and friends, and by the participants themselves, who reported a perceived lack of information from the start. They particularly appreciated looking at 3D models of the brain, the differences between ischaemic and haemorrhagic stroke etc. When asked what would make life with aphasia easier, one participant said ‘If everyone had it’.

Plans for the Future

- Given the predominant theme of aphasia awareness, several participants were interested in taking this forward. One participant was a professional film maker, who was interested in making a short film about aphasia; this is still in the planning stage, as he had commitments immediately after the group ended.
- Several participants wanted to explore return to work (paid employment or supported employment/volunteering). Participants expressed frustration at not knowing what support might be available, or how to access it. INS will host a ‘vocational marketplace’ event later in 2026, bringing together statutory and non-statutory agencies who support adults with disabilities to return to meaningful occupation.
- Funding for an ongoing group is under review. Some participants have been referred to other local aphasia resources, and 5 participants currently receive input (either 1:1 or group) at INS. We have also supported group members with one off issues eg supporting letters for housing issues, or for exemption from the Life in the UK test for citizenship.