

5. S. Northcott, N. Behn, K. Monnelly, B. Moss, J. Marshall, S. Thomas, A. Simpson, S. McVicker, C. Flood, K. Goldsmith & K. Hilari (2021) "For them and for me": a qualitative exploration of peer befrienders' experiences supporting people with aphasia in the SUPERB feasibility trial, *Disability and Rehabilitation*, DOI: [10.1080/09638288.2021.1922520](https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2021.1922520)

*Purpose:* Peer-befriending, where support is offered by someone with shared lived experience, is an intervention that may facilitate successful adjustment in people experiencing post-stroke aphasia. This paper explores the experiences of the peer-befrienders.

*Materials & Methods:* People with aphasia were recruited as peer-befrienders within the SUPERB trial investigating befriending for people with post-stroke aphasia. The intervention comprised six visits over three months. Peer-befrienders were matched with at least one befriendees and received training and ongoing supervision. They were invited to participate in in-depth interviews which were analysed using framework analysis.

*Results:* All 10 befrienders participated in interviews, reporting on 19 matches. Seven main themes emerged: content of the sessions; befriender–befriendees relationship; negotiating the visits; handling boundaries and endings; positive impact of the befriending for befrienders and befriendees; and beliefs about the nature and value of peer support. While befrienders described challenges, such as negotiating journeys and witnessing distress, the role was perceived as a "secure challenge" due to the support and training received.

*Conclusions:* Befrienders perceived the role as enjoyable and rewarding, and felt they were making a positive difference. They were unanimous in believing that people with aphasia can offer unique and valuable support to others with aphasia.

*Implications for Rehabilitation:*

- People with lived experience of stroke and aphasia were able to offer emotional and social peer support to others with aphasia within the SUPERB trial.
- Although there were challenges, peer befrienders perceived the role as rewarding and satisfying.
- Peer befrienders valued the training and ongoing supervision and support they received to deliver the intervention.
- It is recommended that rehabilitation professionals considering offering peer-befriending schemes provide training and ongoing supervision to support peer-befrienders fulfil their role, as well as practical support with, e.g., arranging visits.