

Autumn 2021

NEWSLETTER

Keeping you up to date with News and Events



We're meeting again!

Since starting 'Dyscover at Home' in April 2020, we have run more than 380 weekly conversation groups over Zoom. "This is an incredible achievement", says Rosemary, "and I am so proud and grateful to our staff team whose hard work, flexibility and commitment have made this possible."

This September we are excited to take our first steps towards a mixed online and in person service. We are managing the return to face groups with caution, since we know the threat of Covid is not yet over.

Planning for the autumn term started in June. We asked members whether they'd prefer Zoom or in person groups, we invited eight members to Leatherhead for a consultation and practical trial, we spoke to our landlords, and read government advice.

Staff then set about **grouping members with similar needs.**

Dyscover's groups have always been **tailored to the different stages of recovery**, and we want to continue this, in order to provide maximum benefit to our members.

This involved a major sorting exercise – as seen in the picture!



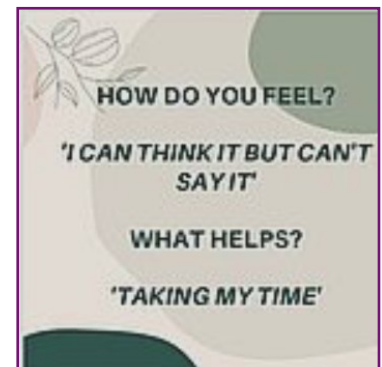
Autumn term plans

We expect to be supporting 90 members each week in eight groups. Five groups will remain on Zoom, two will be in person at Leatherhead, and one at Kingston. We are also introducing a monthly group at Kingston, and **an experimental 'Aphasia cafe'** - more news about this in the next issue.

Spreading the word

Nine out of ten people still do not know about aphasia and we want to change this.

Our Aphasia Ambassadors have a powerful voice and during Aphasia Awareness



Month in June we asked them to help us by saying **how aphasia feels and what helps.**

Turn to page 6 to read more about how our Ambassadors are spreading the word.

To find out more about Dyscover

Please go to www.dyscover.org.uk or contact us for details of our online visitor sessions on Zoom, or to receive our regular newsletters.

Follow us on social media

To find our page on Facebook search for Dyscover non-profit organisation.

@dyscoveraphasia

@DyscoverAphasia



Update from the Trustees

Over the summer, the Trustees have enjoyed meeting up in person again, and I am really excited to welcome some members back to Leatherhead and Kingston this autumn term too.

A great deal of time and thought has gone into planning this first term of 'mixed' online and in person working. We have **more members than ever before**, many of whom are unable to travel to Dyscover and feel this is the best way to meet their needs. Staff will be monitoring this carefully, so we can learn and make improvements.

We are pleased to **welcome two new Trustees** to the Board. **Achim Vogt** has a finance background as well as considerable experience working in the charity sector. **Mike McCartney** worked in IT before having a stroke, and first became involved with Dyscover as a member. We look forward to introducing Mike and Achim to our members and the Dyscover team who support them.



John Woollatt, Chairman



Spotlight on Speech and Language Assistant **Helen Ingram**

Helen was a real globetrotter early in her career. She worked in staff training for the **British Council** at a time when new computer systems were being introduced. It was a five-year project to train all 10,000 staff in the computer skills needed to do their jobs. Helen estimates that she **visited 50 countries!** She was involved in online Zoom training.

After marrying Jim she wanted a **more settled career** and worked with Richmond and Wandsworth Council. She delivered a range of training to staff, including emergency planning and staff wellbeing, and supported play sessions at Richmond Children's Centres.

During the pandemic the **whole family was happy to work from home**. Jim is a market researcher and daughters Chloe and Freya really enjoyed home schooling.

Last December Helen decided on a career change. She **joined us in March**, just as lockdown rules were being relaxed and was able to come to our Leatherhead HQ for her first day. Helen met the whole staff team when she **joined them in the Captain Tom Challenge** to walk a combined 100 miles from our centre in Kingston to Leatherhead.

Last term Helen was involved in two weekly Zoom sessions. She enjoyed **getting to know individual members and their needs**, as well as preparing resources and topics for the sessions. She is looking forward **working with in person groups at Kingston** this term.

Helen's hobbies include watercolour painting, walking and camping.

Around Dyscover

New group names

In last term's newsletter we wrote about our 'different groups for different needs'. This is what makes Dyscover distinctive. We have introduced some new terms to help us describe our three main types of group.

FOUNDATION PROGRAMME is for new joiners, introducing them to others with aphasia, and helping them to understand and use communication strategies.

EXTEND AND EXPLORE PROGRAMMES aim to **develop confidence, participation,** and confidence further - for some this might include taking on volunteer or work roles.

SUSTAIN PROGRAMME offers the security of longer term support and a sense of community for people with aphasia and their families.

Alongside our regular groups, Suzanne leads all our **extra activities**, which include both physical and creative sessions. We are calling this our **CHALLENGE PROGRAMME**, because this is what it does, in so many different ways! **Read all about them on page 8.**

Funding update from Alice

IT FUNDRAISING has hit the halfway mark with a further £10k needed to complete the website and software upgrades. Huge thanks to The Clothworkers Foundation who have pledged to support our hardware upgrade and Fidelity who have donated some funds towards our new website.

EXPANSION PLANS We are moving onto a development phase and will be recruiting a project leader. We shall be embarking on an expansion of our online support services, using Zoom to reach more people with aphasia who are currently unable to gain access to specialist support. I will be focussing on raising £60,000 to support this phase.

Studying Zoom groups

We know it is sometimes hard for people with aphasia to talk online. A team of human-computer interaction researchers from King's College and City University, London, asked Dyscover to help them investigate the good and bad things about running sessions on Zoom.

37 members allowed the researchers to video the conversations that they had in Dyscover Zoom groups. Researchers watched and analysed more than 10 hours of recorded conversations. They also interviewed members, staff and volunteers.

The analysis is not yet complete, but Tim, the lead researcher says, **"We are amazed how Dyscover have adapted to this challenging transition.** We have learned how communication styles change when meeting online. We hope to use these findings to improve this technology, especially for people with aphasia."

What do you think?

Forty-five members responded to our annual survey, which asks what they value about Dyscover, and how satisfied they are. We are encouraged by the results.

As in previous years' surveys, **80% of members rate the long term nature of Dyscover's work and its leadership by Speech and Language Therapists as 'very important'.**

82% rated Dyscover as very good or excellent

When asked how Dyscover had helped

82% said they felt less alone

68% said their communication was better

52% said they understood their aphasia better

Groups in action

Explore Group reunion

Members of our Explore Group all shared aspirations of returning to the workplace, volunteering or community involvement. Three months after the group finished, Rhona invited the eight participants back to review their progress.

Impressively, all eight had either returned to a modified role within their workplace, had taken on new volunteering roles, or had identified a training course with a view to pursuing a change of career.

Several people remarked how helpful it had been to meet **Nick, a former Dyscover member**, who talked about his return to work. One member said **“He gave me confidence to change, and that, for me, is what this group has done.”**

Little or no support is available for people with aphasia considering a return to work. We are delighted that **Rhona’s pioneering work with the Explore Group was published** by the British Aphasiology Society, in their recent newsletter.



PAUL is making photography his career. Taking photographs has helped in his recovery, encouraging relaxation and challenging him to plan and produce better shots. He sells them through a website – **paulbrownsphotography.co.uk** Paul gives a percentage of his sales to Dyscover and QEF, where he received rehabilitation.



MAGGIE works at Waitrose Dorking five hours a week. “I find it totally exhausting but it makes me realise I am still a valued member of the Partnership. I feel I can do things still, albeit a bit slower. I also make myself look half-decent once a week!”

Keep challenging yourself

Ten years after his stroke, Gary proves that recovery and progress can go on...and on! He joined Dyscover eight years ago and his approach to recovery is to set himself challenges.

The latest was to study for the **RYA Essential Navigation qualification**. He had joined Elaine’s Friday reading group at Dyscover and this gave him the confidence to start his studies, which he completed ‘to a high standard’. Next challenge is the **RYA Day Skipper course**.

Elaine used her interest in gardening to set a series of goals.

Working in the Courtyard Garden at Leatherhead inspired her to choose a rehabilitation route. She is studying towards a **City and Guilds qualification in horticulture** at the Patchworking Garden Academy in Dorking. Having **passed the Level 1 Diploma**, she is more confident to move on to Level 2. Elaine hopes to **consider part-time employment** in the future.



Groups in action

Going to London again

Our Wednesday Group have been getting out and about as restrictions ease. Susie organised **a trip to Central London** and met with other members at the London Eye. For some this was the **first time they had travelled by train by themselves following their stroke**.

Julian said he had a great day, especially as this was his first trip into London for 18 months.



Gadgets

The groups had some lively discussions on the topic of gadgets and technology. Members **shared their favourite gadgets**, which ranged from mobile phones and TV to cake mixers and even rubber bands!



Nial showed his groups a neat **device he uses to clamp a beer bottle**, enabling him to open it with just one hand. Sarah shared a Bra Angel gadget for helping a lady put on her bra one-handed.

Members agreed that **technology had been hugely beneficial** for them since their stroke and also during the COVID pandemic, helping them to stay in touch with family and friends – including those at Dyscover!

Spotlight on Fiona Goldsmith



Before her stroke in January 2020, Fiona had a **long career as a nurse**, working first with premature babies, then as a school nurse.

Fiona was preparing for work when she turned to grab a towel “and the whole wall exploded into an Austin Powers burst of psychedelia”.

Fiona dialled 111, but because her main problems were balance and vision, it was **three days before she was diagnosed with an occipital stroke**.

She **lost confidence as well as balance** after her stroke. Walking became scary; without a defining line like a hedge or wall, Fiona felt as if she was falling over a precipice. This has improved but “It

takes much more brain effort to do anything,” says Fiona, “walking, especially if also chatting, feels like an aerobic session.” Memory and word processing are other frustrating issues.

Fiona’s Occupational Therapist told her about Dyscover. “They have been amazing,” she says, “**helping to build my confidence**, and stamina in conversation, without having to sleep afterwards!” They also signposted other resources.

“I am so impressed and grateful to Dyscover that I have offered to volunteer and will **soon start as an Aphasia Ambassador.**”

Fiona is an adventurous person and loves travelling. She looks forward to seeing more friends and doing more travelling as it becomes safer. Her energetic grandchildren keep her busy and now she has her licence confirmed she will be driving more, especially to her partner who lives further away.

During the summer she spent lots of time in the garden, which is **her happy place**.

Have you Heard

Volunteers' Week

We recently shared a video the staff had made thanking all of our wonderful volunteers for their hard work.

Go to You Tube Dyscover to have a look.

22 Dyscover at Home Volunteers helped in our online groups or made a weekly phone call to

a member. Other volunteers include Trustees who provide us with leadership and governance, those who help in our garden, with our newsletter, our Top Draw scheme and community fundraising.

Many of our volunteers go on to study Speech and Language therapy or get a job in this field.



Barry on high

Barry went **micro-light flying with Sportability**. In the past he has been able to try gliding, blow carting, skydiving and four wheel driving. Sportability offers its activities free. Visit <https://www.sportability.org.uk/> to find out more.



Support for relatives

During the pandemic we had to change the way we offered support to families of Dyscover members. We **responded to more individual calls and emails**, and ran relatives' **meetings over Zoom**.

Last term 12 family members attended two support sessions, dividing into smaller groups to introduce themselves to one another, and **share their knowledge and experiences**. There was plenty of empathy, laughter and practical ideas, and some made plans to **meet up outside of Dyscover**.

Ambassadors online

We have been able to **use Zoom technology** to improve our **visitor sessions** and training. Participants have told us how they **appreciated being able to talk to ambassadors in small groups**, and how much it has helped them learn about aphasia and the work of Dyscover. We plan to continue to use Zoom as we attract a higher number of attendees and the sessions are more effective.

We are also **looking at new ways for ambassadors to tell their stories** – through short video clips and written accounts.

A garden for everyone

Our gardeners have spent over three years totally renovating and **maintaining the courtyard garden at Leatherhead**. The results are absolutely spectacular and we decided to host an Open Garden for members and volunteers. The aim was to showcase the hard work and beautiful results, but also to say a **big thank you to Sue Edwards**, our horticulturalist who has coached the gardening team throughout.

Award for Sue

Sue won a **Reigate and Banstead Mayor's Volunteer Award** for all her work on the garden. She also opened her own garden in September, raising an incredible £650 for Dyscover.



Fundraising

Money from marathons

JULIAN RADLINGER ran his **first ultra-marathon**, completing an incredible 50 km in the London 2 Brighton Ultra Challenge event. His time was just **4 hours 17 minutes** and he raised £2007, which will give a huge boost to our IT upgrade appeal.

JO CURTIS was set to run the London Marathon for us in 2019 but got injured. In 2020, because of Covid, she had to do the Virtual marathon instead. Jo is determined! This year, on 3rd October, she will **finally** run the **real** London Marathon. You can support her at:

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/JoCurtis8>

MANDY NICKERSON will be running her **second London Marathon** for us. Support her at: <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/MandyNickerson1>



Charity of the year

We are delighted to have been chosen as **Squires (Cobham) Charity of the Year**. Liz and Alice went along to launch this partnership and meet the manager Sam and the rest of the team. We look forward to arranging some fundraising events with them.



Soundbytes

When local choir Soundbytes could not raise funds for us at their summer concert, they created two beautiful fundraising videos and made £380.

Top Draw - a different Christmas gift

Anyone who is given a share in Dyscover's Top Draw Club as a Christmas present has the **chance to win 25 cash prizes during 2022**.

Annual shares in the club cost just £10 and there are five draws throughout the year. Half of the cost of each share goes to Dyscover, with the rest distributed as prizes. Full details are on our website: www.dyscover.org.uk

Mole Valley Lottery

A Dyscover volunteer won £250 in the **first Mole Valley Community Lottery draw!** This lottery not only raises funds for local charities, but also helps local environmental causes. Draws are held weekly and tickets start at just £1 each week. You can **buy tickets to support Dyscover** at:

<https://www.molevalleylottery.co.uk/support/dyscover>

Quiz & Curry night

Save the date, Monday 18th October at 7.30 for the quiz and 3-course Indian meal at the Ashtead Balti. You can buy tickets at: <https://www.jumblebee.co.uk/dyscovercurryquizevening>

Gardening tips

Experienced gardener and local councillor **Julie Morris** gave an **interesting and informative talk** on Zoom about her top ten plants. She then took questions, giving **lots of useful tips** and ideas. The evening raised over £100.

Ashtead Train Station

£240 has been raised so far though a **book sharing scheme** at the station.

Holiday Activities

Meeting and Zooming

It was a delight to meet up with old friends for some of this year's summer activities, but we continued with Zoom sessions, too.

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Kingston member Sarah agreed to prepare for and lead a session on the power of music. It was illustrated with pictures and audio clips, and ended with a group quiz. Putting together and running this took a **huge amount of time and courage**, which Sarah puts down to Dyscover's support. "I've gone from being a person without a voice to someone who won't shut up." Ten members listened to Sarah's talk and were full of praise: 'Sarah was so clear and calm!' 'Amazing, intelligent and funny too!'



COMPANION CYCLING

We visited Bushy Park three times. Old hands were joined by newcomers to our most popular holiday activity.



PILATES

Finally Natalie had the chance to teach members face to face and she was really tough on everyone! Resistance bands made the exercises even harder.



CONTACT US

www.dyscover.org.uk



Dyscover Limited, Leatherhead Court, Woodlands Road, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 0BN

Tel: 01737 819419 Email: info@dyscover.org.uk

Registered Office: As above | Company No: 4814618 | Registered Charity No: 1099432

ART



A Zoom class studied negative space, using charcoal. A bit messy, but it was interesting to look at objects in a different way!

Summer still life with paint was the topic for a relaxing 'live' session.



SHOOTING

Everyone was thrilled to return to shooting and we plan to run more sessions in the future,



SOCIALISING

We visited Chessington Garden Centre for coffee and cakes. Thanks to Barry and Susie for hosting.



CONVERSATION

Gill Jackson, our President, hosted a Zoom session themed 'Back in Time'. Stories ranged from early childhood to Victorian times.



Registered with



FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR



DAA Dementia
Action Alliance