

Spring 2021

# NEWSLETTER

Keeping you up to date with News and Events



## International Award for Gill and Dyscover

The Robin Tavistock Award is presented annually to an 'inspirational' individual or organisation making a significant contribution in the field of aphasia.

Our founder Gill Jackson and Dyscover received the prestigious award this year. It is only the second time it has been made jointly to an individual and an organisation.

Gill and Rosemary met Henrietta, Duchess of Bedford, and Nicole Campbell of the Tavistock Trust for Aphasia over Zoom and hope to meet in person later this year.

We have received many messages of congratulation from supporters, clinicians and researchers around the world.



## We need Trustees

Our Board of Trustees is made up of **volunteers with a wide range of experience** and skills. We are now seeking new Trustees; **more details in our Chairman's report** on page 2.

## To find out more about Dyscover

Please go to [www.dyscover.org.uk](http://www.dyscover.org.uk) or contact us for details of our Open Days and events, or to receive our regular newsletters.

## Follow us on social media



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



@dyscoveraphasia

## Dyscover at Home: looking ahead

Online groups have proved more aphasia friendly and inclusive than we expected. Some members find them easier than travelling to Dyscover. We can also **reach new people** who live further afield. However many of us miss meeting face to face. We hope to gradually offer a **mix of online and face to face groups** over the next few months, as shown on our 'road map'.

### March 2021

Continue with Dyscover at Home



National Vaccination Programme



### May

Plan autumn groups survey members, conduct risk assessments



### April

Start outdoor activities (golf, cycling) in small groups



### June/July

Trial face to face small group at Leatherhead



### July/Aug

Summer activities programme – indoor and outdoor.



**dyscover**  
specialist aphasia support

'Road Map'



### September 2021

Combination of face to face and Zoom group options



## Update from the Trustees

We are delighted to start the term with news of the **Robin Tavistock Award, made by the Tavistock Trust for Aphasia. There is something very special about being recognised by the only aphasia-specific grant maker in Europe.** It provides us with the impetus and confidence to drive our plans forward to reach more people with aphasia.



**FUTURE DEVELOPMENT** Trustees and staff continue to work on Dyscover's future development. **An aphasia friendly version of our strategic plan** was sent to all members last term, which explains how **we hope to secure larger grants** to help us grow. Defining projects, calculating budgets and writing grant applications involves a lot of work for Alice, Rosemary and Trustees, especially with the uncertainty of the pandemic.

**SEARCH FOR TRUSTEES** We are still looking for **enthusiastic new people to join our Trustee Board.** We are especially keen to hear from individuals who have experience of aphasia and people with a fundraising background. Please contact me if you are interested in this role at [jwoollatt@dyscover.org.uk](mailto:jwoollatt@dyscover.org.uk)

**John Woollatt, Chairman**



### Spotlight on Trustee Rosa Dennis

Rosa joined us as a Trustee in 2019, bringing wide experience of Speech and Language Therapy. Her first job was in Exeter, treating both children and adults. Rosa soon decided her **main interest was in working with adults** and spent four years at the brain injury rehab unit of Frenchay Hospital in Bristol.

Her next move was to Surrey. Over 30 years ago she **met and worked with Rosemary Townsend**, who was in her first job. Their paths crossed again many years later, working for the same team based at Milford Hospital. Speech and Language Therapy is a very small world!

Rosa heard about Dyscover and referred some patients to us. Their **feedback was very positive** and Rosa was able to convince more patients to give Dyscover a try.

At the end of her career Rosa was **managing a large group of therapists in West Surrey**, coordinating services across five hospitals and community settings. She and Rosemary had kept in touch over the years and as Rosa's retirement beckoned Rosemary raised the possibility of becoming a Trustee with Dyscover. After some persuasion and reflection, Rosa agreed!

**Covid interrupted Rosa's retirement plans** and she was not able to be a hands-on grandmother to her new grandson Austin, or to continue travelling. She is delighted that visits to Austin and his mother Alexandra are now possible as they are in a support bubble.

Rosa is looking forward to being part of Dyscover's return to normal." It will take some management," she says, "but **the possibilities of running both face to face and Zoom activities are very exciting.**"

# Around Dyscover

## Aphasia Forum

**Plans to repeat the successful 2017 international conference for people with aphasia were disrupted by the pandemic. Undaunted, Gill and Rosemary worked with Gill Pearl of Speakeasy in Manchester to run three online Aphasia Forums earlier this year. Five Dyscover members helped to design the sessions.**

About 40 people attended each session; they focussed on **awareness raising, technology and wellbeing**. Dyscover led the wellbeing session and Rosemary introduced the '5 ways to wellbeing'. Barry, Sarah, Nikki, Suzie and Sarah **talked about what lifts their mood**. 76% of the participants agreed that wellbeing was a good topic and 64% said they plan to try something new to boost wellbeing.



85% of participants said they would like more Aphasia Forums. **Thanks to a grant from the Tavistock Trust for Aphasia, Dyscover and Speakeasy will run three more this year.**

## Funding update from Alice

### IT UPGRADE

The past year has shone a spotlight on our now **dated IT system and equipment**. We want to be able to benefit from **developments in technology** and have formulated plans for a major IT upgrade. **This includes a new website** which the team hope will improve community engagement, be more aphasia and disability friendly and work more efficiently. **The cost is slightly over £20,000** and Alice is currently fundraising to make the plans a reality.

### EXPANDING OUR SERVICES

Dyscover is working on exciting plans to build on the **skills developed during the pandemic**. Alice's next challenge will be to secure funding for a **combined online and face to face support service**.

## Zoom group with INS

A Twickenham-based charity, INS, has asked us to **help their clients with aphasia**. Gayle and Caroline will be leading a Learning to Live with Aphasia group this term. The eight group **members all live in the Hounslow and Richmond area** and most will be meeting others with aphasia for the first time.

Gayle hopes they will develop **strategies to improve their communication** and will grow in confidence. We know we will also learn from the experience and look forward to **reporting in the next newsletter**.



## New services

Referrals to Dyscover have **doubled over the pandemic**. Sometimes people are not ready to join our established groups, so **we try to be flexible**. Meeting a couple of members in a **small 'Welcome' group might help**. For those with more severe aphasia, we may offer them and their partner **short 1:1 sessions** with one of our Speech and Language Therapists.

## Farewell

**JENNY RICHARDSON** We thanked Trustee Jenny for her three years of service. Jenny particularly **supported Liz and the volunteer team**, and also led our **Feedback Forum**, enjoying chatting to members and seeking their views. She was always ready to help at fundraising events, too.



## Welcome

**HELEN INGRAM** joins us as a SALT Assistant. When face to face groups resume she will be **based in Kingston**. Helen is now working with Rhona in our Tuesday morning Zoom group and visiting other groups.





# Dyscover at Home

## Exploring the future

**“I don’t know what I’m good at any more,” said one member when we asked about attitudes and expectations of returning to work.** People told us they felt uncertain and unconfident, and agreed that there was little support or information available. Working over Zoom enabled us **form an ‘Explore’ group** of eight like-minded members last term.

Led by Rhona and Caroline, with the valuable support of volunteer Claire, a psychologist, **the group reflected on their skills and experiences**, and discussed opportunities and goals. Nick Meese, a former member who has returned to work, was a ‘guest speaker’; members found **him ‘inspiring, positive, determined’** .

By the end of the course, **all members had made significant progress**. Paul is building his photography business, Fiona has applied for a job, Elaine has embarked on a City and Guilds Diploma. Others have made a decision to stop roles they found unhelpful and direct their energy to new projects. **Feedback on the course was overwhelmingly positive.**



## A year of Zoom

**Dyscover has been delivering regular weekly Zoom groups - over 300 - to more than one hundred members for a whole year.**

The **adjustments and changes made to our service**, whilst continuing to support people with aphasia remotely, have been significant.

Speech and Language Therapy Assistant, Suzanne said “It has been an incredible year full of **innovation, new learning and enduring success**. We have such a loyal, dedicated and hardworking team of staff and volunteers that have made the last year a triumph.



**“Our Members have also shown boundless enthusiasm and resilience and continue to be our inspiration.”**

## Friendship

During a Thursday Group discussion, Claire described some of **the most important friendships** she has made since joining Dyscover.

Her photo includes **three friends from her early days with us**. It was taken in 2006 and



includes Frances (Speech and Language Therapist) Trish (member) and Mike (member/volunteer). They were **visiting Parliament to lobby for improved funding for Aphasia Support**. Claire said she enjoyed recalling this occasion and the time spent with her friends on **such an important mission**.

Frances and Mike continue to support Dyscover from afar and Trish is still a regular member.

# Dyscover at Home

## Different groups for different needs

One of the things that makes Dyscover distinctive is that we offer different groups for different needs. Experience has taught us that members make most progress in a group of like-minded people, which has a clear structure and purpose.

**RHONA** is working with members who have milder aphasia, **challenging them to initiate conversation**, expand on topics, and ask questions.

**GAYLE and SUZANNE** are enabling **members with little or no speech to develop more independence** in their conversations.

In the early months of Dyscover at Home, **family members were often present** on the call. This helped ensure success with the technology and gave members confidence. However as we became more used to Zoom conversations, Gayle felt **members would benefit from more independence**.

She **sent members Yes / No cards and other printed resources** to aid non-verbal communication, and asked partners to step out of the room. **Results were impressive!** With Gayle and Suzanne's support, members found they enjoyed the responsibility of getting their message across. One even **insisted that his wife remained outside the room** for the whole session!



## Spotlight on Tim Bowden



**Tim is an enthusiastic member of the Wednesday afternoon group** and has been coming for three years. He had a **40-year career as a chef**, including 12 years in Saudi Arabia.

His stroke occurred while he was at home alone but he managed to phone his wife Stella who dialled 999. **The stroke was severe** and Tim spent five months in hospital. At first he was unable to see, read or understand very much. When interviewed for this article, Tim used **facial expression and gesture to show how depressed he had felt** in these early months.

Gradually, despite having little speech, Tim's **natural optimism began to resurface**. After joining the Wednesday afternoon group, his

confidence increased as he became **expert at conveying meaning non verbally**. He is a keen supporter of extra activities, including Pilates, music and art. He and Stella mastered Zoom and are regular participants in our online sessions.

Stella has been a constant support and attended a **Conversation Partners course with Tim**.

Gayle Chandler, the Speech and Language therapist who leads Tim's group, says. "We have seen a remarkable change. Tim's aphasia is still severe and he cannot speak, but, with support for his communication, **he participates, initiates and has fun**. He enjoys a positive life."

He and Stella have coped well with the restrictions of lockdown and Tim had plenty of time to nurture **his collection of Bonsai trees**. They are very much looking forward to visits from their family, including two young grandchildren. **Other goals are going to the pub and visiting France**.

# Have you Heard

## Vicky on air

**Vicky Carter** is a talented young journalist and broadcaster who **works for BBC Radio**. In her spare time she produces a podcast and makes documentaries. **Her mother is our very own Chris Carter**, who had her stroke when Vicky was just four, and has been part of Dyscover for many years.



Vicky and Rosemary worked together to make a documentary about aphasia. **Vicky recorded five hours of Zoom conversation** with members, as well as her mum Chris. She also interviewed Rosemary. Many hours of editing later, Vicky had a **polished and professional 30-minute documentary** which was broadcast on BBC Radio Surrey.

To our great delight, she also secured **a spot on Radio 4's World at One** and then an **interview with herself, Rosemary and Nicky on Radio 5 Live**.

## Virtual visitor sessions

We always enjoy welcoming local Speech and Language Therapists and other visitors to our centres. Recently we have found that online sessions appear more popular and convenient.

At the **latest online session**, Rosemary gave an overview of



Dyscover's services and then **introduced our visitors to members in breakout rooms for some conversation**. Visitors valued the opportunity to hear directly from the people who attend Dyscover. Members enjoyed engaging with people who work in hospitals and community services, and **emphasised the importance of long-term support**.

## Online training

**We have found that training can work well over Zoom** and this has enabled us to reach people from further afield. **Members play a significant part in the new online training**, which combines theory and practice.

Rosemary has produced an **online version of the 'Understanding Aphasia'** introductory course that we run for new volunteers and staff at Dyscover.

**Nine students attended our most recent session**, all of whom were interested in Speech and Language Therapy as a career. **Eight Dyscover members helped the students to practise strategies they had learned**, and gave insights into the impact of aphasia on their lives.

**Feedback was very positive**. One student wrote:

*"All the information presented was very useful and practical. I really appreciated the focus on the impact of aphasia on a person's life, as I feel like this is often missed in books/studies."*

## PPA

**Switching our support for people with Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA) to Zoom has brought unexpected benefits.**

Says Rosemary, "Suddenly we are getting referrals from **other parts of the UK and abroad**. People tell us they are benefitting from this type of support."

Rosemary has also found it easier to **connect with clinicians and academics in the PPA field**, and has joined an international networking group.



## Summer golf

Our golfers were **delighted to get back together** at the end of April. Nick joined them for the first time, after some practice at home!



# Fundraising

## Dyscover's Captain Tom 100 Challenge

Ten staff, including our President Gill, gave up their bank holiday Monday to take on Dyscover's answer to The Captain Tom 100 Challenge.

Dyscover member Maggie challenged herself to do 100 x 100 metres, ten kilometres!

Liz planned a route of 10 miles between the Kingston Quaker Centre and Leatherhead Court, so **between them the team covered 100 miles!** Support continues to come in to Dyscover's



Just Giving page. **Donations totalled over £5,000 when we went to press!**

***You can still boost our totals! Search Dyscover Just Giving Captain Tom, or Virgin Money Giving Maggie Mellett. Thank you***

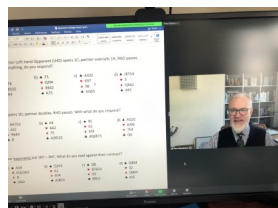


"I was nervous before it started" said Maggie, "but it went quite quickly and **I was elated at the end.**" She made a plan to run 100m then walk 400m. Her **friend**

**Candace spurred her on.** Maggie has already raised £2,760.

## Virtual Bridge

Our first-ever virtual Bridge Masterclass was a huge success and **raised an amazing £1,135.** Leading Bridge author and coach, **Paul Mendelson, generously gave his time** to host the event. It proved so popular that we hope to organise another.



## Hosting an open garden?

Have you been working hard in your garden during lockdown? Would you consider hosting an **open garden to raise money for us?** Please contact Community Fundraising Coordinator Liz: [lgrace@dyscover.org.uk](mailto:lgrace@dyscover.org.uk)

## Top Draw - make a wish

What would you buy with an **unexpected cash prize** from Dyscover's Top Draw Club? One lucky winner invested in a food smoker for his barbecue. **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 - **totalling £2,000 last year** - with the rest distributed as prizes. Full details are on our website: [www.dyscover.org.uk](http://www.dyscover.org.uk)

## London Virtual Marathon

Dyscover has secured three places in the London Virtual Marathon on 3 October. **Runners will be part of the biggest Marathon ever staged and can take part on the course of their choice anywhere on the planet! If you or someone you know would like to take on this challenge for us, contact [lgrace@dyscover.org.uk](mailto:lgrace@dyscover.org.uk)**

## Spring raffle

Our online raffle throughout March **raised £455.** Prizes included beauty treatments and Easter baskets. Our **thanks to the local businesses who donated such lovely prizes.**



## Epsom Golf Club Ladies

We are delighted to have been chosen by incoming Captain Kay Briggs and the Ladies' Section at Epsom Golf Club as their **charity of the year.** They are very positive about Dyscover's work and we look forward to collaborating with them.

# Holiday Activities

## Companion cycling again!

At last, Dyscover Members had the **chance to meet up in person** as we returned to one of our favourite holiday activities, Companion Cycling, in a very chilly Bushy Park. Sarah said "It was lovely to see the deer in the Park this morning and so **wonderful to see Suzanne and to finally meet Bruce and Maggie**".

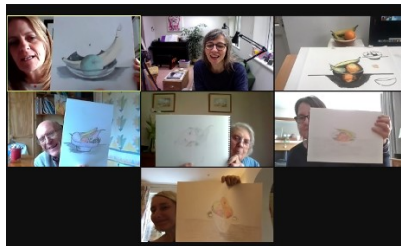
Susie tried out a two-wheeled bike for the first time since her stroke and **cycled a whole lap of the park**.

Bruce our volunteer said, "A very enjoyable day – I've already forgotten all about the temperature!"



## Art

Art is back on Zoom with professional artist, Alison. This time we **practised our ellipses** to begin with and then moved on to create many individual and **impressive bowls of fruit**.



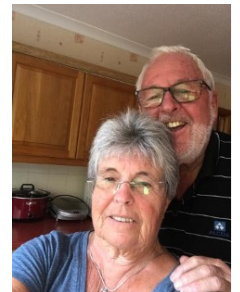
Alison said what a lovely session it was and how **glad she was to see everyone again**.

Renee hadn't picked up her drawing pencils for over four years but thoroughly **enjoyed getting back into one of her favourite pastimes**.



## Relatives' relaxation class

Four members' wives took part in our first holiday activity arranged exclusively for relatives: **a stretch, relax and mindfulness class**. Providing support and friendship to relatives is a huge part of what Dyscover offers. Natalie, our regular Pilates instructor, ran the class.



Barbara said "I joined Natalie's relaxation class because **an hour spent looking after myself is a pleasant change** and it's important for me to stay well so that I can look after John properly. I really enjoyed the class, Natalie is a brilliant teacher. Knowing that your focus has to be on the members, **it is much appreciated that you think of the carers too**."

## Healthy eating with Maggie

Maggie **designed, wrote and delivered a session on Healthy Eating** to eight fellow members. She had her stroke just over two years ago and hopes to return to her role as a Healthy Eating Specialist at Waitrose.

Maggie said, "**At first I was nervous but I soon got into my stride**. Suzanne was great at asking the participants questions and **getting everyone involved**. Being asked to do this has **boosted my confidence no end**. I hope everyone who joined in feels confident about making healthier choices when they shop. I found this really helpful as **my Branch Manager has asked me to do the presentation online** for invited customers (gulp!). Onwards and upwards!"



## CONTACT US

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