

NEWSLETTER

Keeping you up to date with News and Events



Zooming in on good news

85% of our members are now taking part in one of our weekly Zoom groups, and seldom missing meetings.

Members have **logged on from holidays** in Tenerife, Spain and South Africa, and after moving home. We have also been able to **reach out to more people with aphasia**. 22 of the people we supported in the Autumn had never met us in real life! We have even used Zoom meetings to support a family in California.

We continued to contact members who preferred to keep in touch through phone calls and the regular mail out.

Brian joined us in May for **Conversation Partners'** sessions with his wife Loretta. He met other people with aphasia at the golf sessions and later **joined Gayle's Friday group**, which focussed on developing communication strategies and confidence in a small group of people with similar needs.



Brian and Loretta **returned to South Africa** and were able to complete the term's meetings, and attend the Christmas quiz, from their balcony **overlooking the Stellenbosch mountains!**

'Explore' groups

Meeting over Zoom makes it easy to **bring together people with similar needs and goals**. We spotted an opportunity to offer a new type of short term group. Our initial Explore group will **focus on work and volunteering**.

Written and spoken communication in the workplace is often complex and fast paced, and colleagues may not understand how to help people with aphasia. Rhona is welcoming **eight members to this new Explore group**, to share their experiences, discuss topics and support one another.

Dyscover at Home - future plans

We will continue our virtual groups, phone call support and mail outs until it is safe to return to meeting at Leatherhead and Kingston.

The vaccination programme gives us all hope, and staff and trustees have already started to consider how to **resume real life groups**. We are also thinking about how we could continue, and perhaps **develop, our virtual support**.

More success stories inside

Read about our Autumn term activities on pages 4 and 5.

To find out more about Dyscover

Please go to 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

Update from the Trustees

I am so pleased to see the contents of this newsletter which details not only how our members have adapted to new ways of getting together, but also highlights new opportunities opening up for us to reach people who currently have little or no support.

This is due in no small part to the willingness of staff, members and volunteers to **adapt to new ways of working** with a spirit of co-operation and innovation which makes me proud to be a small part of this organisation.

Special thanks to our principal funders last term, **The Tavistock Trust for Aphasia**, whose substantial grant of £20,000 enabled us to run Dyscover at Home.

We hope it won't be too long before we can return to the old 'normal'.

Thank you all for your continued **understanding and commitment**.

John Woollatt, Chairman



The Tavistock Trust for Aphasia



Spotlight on Director of Business **Alice Owen**

Alice joined Dyscover in 2006 assisting the speech and language therapists. Her role expanded and in 2015 she was appointed Development Officer. Here she helped to **develop a new funding strategy and to raise our profile** in the community. In 2019 she was promoted to Director of Business. As well as all aspects of fundraising, she is responsible for **marketing, premises and HR**.

“But,” says Alice, “when we had to close our services in mid-March, I did start to despair. I saw all our **sources of income almost dry up overnight** and wondered whether Dyscover could survive.”

Rosemary and the service team instantly started to work on ways to keep in touch with members. Alice was inspired by their positivity, plus the support of Chairman John and Treasurer Stuart. She **forfeited annual leave over Easter** and worked day and night to master the new furlough rules and to research funding criteria for our work, filling in lengthy application forms.

“Fortunately,” says Alice, “**I had some early successes** which meant we could deliver ‘Dyscover at Home’ pretty much instantly. This really boosted us, as we could demonstrate that we had already adapted and were **still meeting our members’ needs**.”

There were many other demands on Alice's time during the months of lockdown. Her three children are at secondary school and she had to cope with intermittent wi-fi and **problematic food shopping**.

Alice is really **positive about the future**. “We have new skills, new services and a new strategy which integrates with our digital developments and opens up our **reach to more people with aphasia**.”

Around Dyscover

AGM online

Around 50 people attended Dyscover's online AGM.

They included a few members, past and present, along with current and former staff, trustees and volunteers. All were encouraged to hear **how well we had fared in the past financial year**, how we had responded to Covid, and about our **positive plans for the future**.

We are grateful to all our Trustees, especially John, our Chair, and Treasurer Stuart for **their leadership this year**.

We used a 'thumbs up' to vote at the AGM



Funding update from Alice

Fortunately we have good relationships with some of our previous funders, so **our proven track record held us in good stead** at the beginning of the pandemic when we were reliant on emergency funding to help us set up 'Dyscover at Home'.

Having attended (a virtual) **digital fundraising conference**, I came away full of ideas to discuss with Liz and lots to research. A new project I'll be working on with Helena is to **improve our social media** and attract more local interest.

Donations from individuals contribute **around a quarter of our annual income**, so relationships we generate with our supporters in a 'face to face' capacity are really important.

I am currently reviewing our projects and 'core' service costs. Stuart our Treasurer and I will firm up our budgets, making **sure we reflect the actual costs of delivering our services** in our application bids to Trusts and Foundations.

Farewell and thank you



GEORGE THOMOPOULOS joined Dyscover as a trustee nine years ago and brought his **experience of having aphasia** as well as his **wide business knowledge** to the Board. When we had to move premises he **spent many hours researching possible new offices**. George was also well known for the delicious cakes he always brought when he visited.



TRICIA COTTRELL We are sorry to say goodbye to Tricia after two years as a Speech and Language Therapy Assistant. Until this year, **Tricia was based at our Kingston satellite**, but adapted quickly to working with Dyscover at Home

groups. She also **supported the volunteers** who provide weekly phone calls, encouraged a small group of members to use Zoom, and **led a relatives' group**. Tricia has promised to keep in touch.

Aphasia Ambassadors

Working online has opened up new opportunities for members to volunteer as Aphasia Ambassadors. A total of 18 members have taken on the role this term, **many for the first time**. We have invited Ambassadors to be part of virtual open mornings, a student information session, and a training workshop.

Forty-four students on Reading University's SLT teaching programme **gained valuable insights** from a presentation co-delivered by Dyscover staff and members. All the Reading students said speaking to members and hearing about their perspectives and experiences of aphasia was the best part of the session. **It helped to connect theory and practice**. We have been asked repeat the session next academic year.

When we asked Ambassadors if they would help again, 100% said yes!

Dyscover at Home

Making it personal

All of our Zoom groups ran smoothly last term, with a range of topics from Elvis Presley to a mission to Mars. Several members increased their screen-sharing skills, empowering them to have much more control and involvement in their groups.

Some of the best sessions last term were when members **shared something from their own homes**. We always found that discussions flowed very easily when personal items were involved and mutual interests sparked many questions.

Jenni brought along the most unusual item, a **Zambezi Talking Stick**. She celebrated her 20th wedding anniversary in Zimbabwe and her husband Michael asked a local elder to carve a traditional stick.

The talking stick is the story of **Nyaminyami, the river god** of the Zambezi, who is the ancestral spirit and **protector the Tonga people**. Nyaminyami has a body like a snake and a head like a fish. Each section of the stick represents an important part of life for the Tonga.



Blow your own trumpet

One of our Wednesday groups had great fun sharing and hearing each other's stories about achievements and events they were proud of.

From catching big fish and **filming the Sydney Olympics** to abseiling and flying in helicopters, the tales were astonishing and entertaining.

Gary shared with the group a **daredevil experience** of doing a loop-the-loop in a plane which he flew himself (accompanied by an instructor who ducked out of view in the photo.)



Several members were able to **successfully 'screenshare' photographs**, following some training they'd had in the group.

Elaine gave a presentation about her reading group. **More details on the next page.**

Keeping mobile

APHASIAFIT

Eight members took part in the 6-week course run by neuro-physiotherapist Kim. Another course is planned for the Spring term.



GOLF

Due to the lockdown, golf ended early, so Suzanne hosted an extra session on Zoom which included a golfers' quiz. Thanks to Barry for compiling the quiz.

PILATES

Pilates was included in all six groups and enjoyed by 45 members. Natalie will be running an 8-week course in the Spring term.



Dyscover at Home

Meeting changing needs

FRIDAY GROUP

Gayle provided group support and education to people with **moderate to severe aphasia**, as a next step on from 1:1 conversation partner sessions.

Relatives have joined in with sessions, learning more about their partner's aphasia in the process. Dedicated relatives' sessions allowed in depth discussion and sharing of experiences and strategies. Members' **confidence and independence** has developed and they will **move on to different groups for the Spring term**.

TUESDAY GROUP

Rhona's group, for people with **mild to moderate aphasia**, have responded well to being **set challenges**. These have included leading a discussion and speaking on a topic of their choice. This was followed up with **1:1 feedback and advice** from Rhona. Members have appreciated the guidance and felt encouraged to continue **to set themselves goals** for further recovery.

Reading group

Elaine struggled to read after her stroke and wanted to help others. Three members joined the sessions and found regular reading practice so useful they have no plans to stop! Achievements include **reading the numbers on a bank card** to make a payment over the phone and **writing part of the family Christmas newsletter**.

National Service

John gave a fascinating Spotlight talk to members in the Tuesday Afternoon Group about doing National Service in Kenya with the King's African Rifles regiment. His talk was accompanied by a fabulous Powerpoint presentation.



Spotlight on Sarah Lyons



Kingston afternoon member Sarah led a very busy life before her stroke. She was a **front-line officer in the UK Border Force**, working at Heathrow Airport. Following the stroke, she spent four weeks in hospital and five in rehab, and then had to leave to leave to continue treatment for cancer.

Sarah was determined to get back to as normal a life as possible and attended QEF's Mobility Centre to return to driving. While there, her wife Roma found leaflets about Dyscover and Sarah has now been **coming for almost two years**.

What was most helpful? "Talking. When I went to Dyscover I really didn't speak at all. Now I have more to say and the **activities at Dyscover make you talk a lot**." Sarah also took part in extra activities, including swimming and shooting.

During the pandemic Sarah has been **joining our weekly Zoom groups**. "They are a brilliant way to see your friends." Members are invited to prepare topics to talk about and Sarah spoke about her time in Northern Ireland.

She is also very **keen to help raise Dyscover's profile** among Speech and Language Therapists. "It's important to show them what we can achieve," she says. In November Sarah joined Rosemary for a Zoom open morning attended by four therapists.

Her hobbies include **horse riding, singing and baking**. After a sugarcraft course she can produce some very impressive cakes.

A big part of Sarah's life before the pandemic was **regular visits to her family** and that is what she is most looking forward to once things return to normal. She also wants to get back to shooting and swimming with Dyscover.

Have you Heard

Volunteers are key

Our brilliant team of volunteers have been a key element in the success of **Dyscover at Home**. Many have been working with our regular Zoom groups, while others have supported members through weekly phone calls that provide opportunities for conversation. Sue Toothill, although a retired Dyscover volunteer, has been phoning Dick at his residential home and is now able to visit him in the 'igloo'.

Volunteer Coordinator Liz reports a huge surge in the number of **people enquiring about volunteering**. Already, seven new volunteers have joined, or are about to join us.

Some volunteers come to us for a short time to gain experience of working in Speech and Language Therapy (SLT). Three have been offered **places on Masters degree programmes in 2021**.

We held an end-of-term 'Thank you' over Zoom, where we marked some long-service awards and said **goodbye to Carolyn Duke** after five years. Our newsletter editor **Pat Grace has been with us for ten years**. "It's a privilege to be part of such a dynamic and caring organisation," she said. Pat collected her certificate in the car park!



Conversation partners

The pandemic prompted us to **create a new 1:1 service**, based on our Conversation Partners' courses. Since April, eight couples have signed up for a series of individualised Zoom sessions with Gayle or Rosemary. The aim is to equip them with the knowledge and skills to make their conversations more successful and enjoyable. Between sessions, we **have set tasks to practise** and answered questions by email.

Couples in the early months after stroke or after a diagnosis of Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA) tell us they have **found the sessions very helpful**.

Reaching out

Two independent SLTs in the Midlands asked us for **help to run a 'Dyscover at Home' style group over Zoom**. Rosemary offered advice and resources, and checked in with the four members and their relatives. They were all **positive about the experience**, one saying "I felt accepted and included."

We feel there is potential for Dyscover to **develop similar partnerships in the future**.

Relatives' meetings

Meeting members at home over Zoom means some families are 'in the background', and say they now have a **better understanding of how we work**.

Last term, a record 22 people joined relatives' meetings led by Tricia. Breakout rooms allowed us to introduce people who have **partners with similar types of communication difficulty**. We plan to continue in the Spring term.

PPA focus groups

Rosemary was honoured to be one of 15 SLTs from the UK, US, Canada and Australia invited to take part in two focus groups on Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA) over Zoom. The group includes some leading researchers and the project's aim is to establish an international consensus on the most effective ways to help people living with PPA. We are excited about the potential for further collaboration and are looking at options for an international network.

Fundraising

Jo's virtual marathon



When last year's London Marathon had to be postponed, Jo Curtis who was running for Dyscover, decided to take part in the **Virtual Marathon**. On 4th October runners completed a **full 26.2 miles alone and in their local area**.

Weather in Fetcham on the day was extremely windy and rainy, but Jo completed the distance in a very impressive 4 hours 25 mins. **Setting off at 5.30am**, she says despite the bad weather she really enjoyed the run. "The last minute additions of a rain jacket and head torch were a real saviour."

Jo also ran an **online raffle** for Dyscover and her **magnificent overall total was £1,770**.

Rotary leaflets

Dyscover regularly supplies collectors - plus **Santa and a few elves** - for one of Banstead Rotary's Christmas tours around local streets.

The usual collections for local charities had to be **replaced by leaflet drops** asking for online donations.

Dyscover's postmen and women **covered a large area of Nork**. We were delighted to receive a **£360 share of the total collection**.



Sponsors needed

Our events can raise even more for Dyscover if we are able to find **sponsors to meet some of the costs**. Dyscover always acknowledges support from sponsors, for example in our social media and on our website. Please can readers of the newsletter **promote this idea to local business owners** they know.

Give through Facebook

It is now even easier to donate to Dyscover as we have a **Facebook donate button** at the top of our page. It is also possible for people to set up a fundraiser for Dyscover on their own Facebook page.

Christmas quiz

Our first virtual quiz was a huge success, raising almost £500 - double the target!

Congratulations to the **winning team 'Blood Sweat and Tiers'** and also to the winners of the **Best Christmas Hat 'The Two Mask-not-Tiers'**.

Huge thanks to Simon and Barb, quiz masters extraordinaires. Also to Barry for his courageous and moving ambassador presentation. **Generous sponsors** of the event were Fusion Interior Design and J W Carpentry and Building Services. The Plough, Effingham, donated the prize of a meal for two.



Ashtead book exchange



Ashtead Train Station kindly chose Dyscover to benefit from their book swap. The bookcase offers travellers and locals the opportunity to **take away a book or leave a one for others** to choose. Users leave a donation.

Round Up

Christmas raffle? Oh yes we can!

The raffle of wonderful Christmas hampers is a highlight of our festive lunch. Community fundraiser Liz was determined to maintain the tradition. She researched online possibilities and chose the company Raffall. We were thrilled when the online raffle raised over £770 - the same amount we would expect from our 'live' one.

Liz approached local supermarkets for donations to the hampers. We are so grateful to **Asda at Burgh Heath and Morrisons in Reigate** for their generous support - and to everyone who contributed items to the box outside our office in Leatherhead.

There were **13 winners**, including one lucky person who received two hampers!



No Christmas lunch? We'll have a festive quiz

20 members from across Dyscover groups signed up for the end of term quiz. Suzanne and Rosemary were the hosts, joined by **volunteers all in Christmas hats.** The five rounds included food, music, traditions, and events of 2020. Niki said "Thank you, Suzanne, **the quiz was brilliant**" and Patrick said "It's always such fun seeing everyone and laughing together, **so important at this weird time.**"



Top Draw

Another event traditionally held at the lunch is the extra bonus **Christmas Top Draw.** This year it **took place at the office** with five lucky share holders winning prizes.



Many thanks to **organiser Nick for his brilliant adaptability** this year in ensuring these draws have still happened.

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

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