

Autumn 2020

dyscover
specialist aphasia support

NEWSLETTER

Keeping you up to date with News and Events



Dyscover at Home

Our new remote service, 'Dyscover at Home' was created in just four weeks, during the Easter break. Rosemary puts the speed of our response to Covid 19 down to being a small, close knit team with a shared vision.

However she didn't expect the project to be such a success.

"We know **aphasia can be a huge obstacle to using technology**," Rosemary said.

"In March, we predicted that 30 to 40 members would connect over WhatsApp or Zoom, but **by July, we were running seven Zoom groups a week, engaging 63 people with**



aphasia. I've been astonished at the determination of members and the skill and patience of relatives, staff and volunteers"

Whilst the majority were connecting over Zoom, we knew some members couldn't, or didn't want to, use this technology.

Weekly phone calls from a familiar volunteer supported them and provided opportunity for conversation.

Suzanne organised a **Zoom summer programme, see page 8.**

Looking ahead

Meeting face to face will always be better than over a screen. We all look forward to a time when we can resume our regular groups at Leatherhead and Kingston.

For the time being, the threat of Covid 19 remains with us and so **Dyscover at Home will continue this autumn**. We will be offering eight Zoom groups each week, alongside regular phone calls and mail outs.

Members tell us

"I'm surprised I'm developing and learning how to do it. (Zoom)."

"Can I just say thank you for doing it."

"I've done my survey. The only thing is, it could be longer (hours) on Zoom! I can't wait until tomorrow."

"Dyscover is much better. It's other people ...but me ...in the flat... it's me and nobody else."

Covid-19 appeal

Many thanks to everyone who has responded to our emergency Covid appeal. You can still support it at:

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/dyscovercovid19appeal>

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 hope everyone enjoyed their summer break, even though it has been very different to the one any of us could have imagined only six months ago.

As we continue to grapple with the uncertainties of Covid-19, the **pressure on our fundraising** has been even more intense and so it is pleasing to report that **we continue to receive the support of our major donors** and funding for the autumn term has now been fully secured by Alice.



Although a key objective is to return to our group meetings, we will continue with the Dyscover at Home programme until it is safe to do so. The successful development of this online service has also **provided us with opportunities for possible expansion**, so that we can reach more people suffering from aphasia, always ensuring that we maintain our high quality service.

The Trustees are looking to **refine our overall fundraising strategy** so that we can stabilise our income streams and reduce the administrative burden.

Whilst there is still work to be done, these positive factors enable the Trustees to **look to the future with a reasonable degree of optimism.**

Please stay well and safe.

Stuart Knee, Treasurer



Spotlight on Speech and Language Assistant **Tricia Cottrell**

Tricia has been a member of the team at our Kingston Centre for two years. After a whole term working from home, she says, “I realise how much I enjoy and **miss the spontaneity of face to face personal contact** with members and colleagues.”

Tricia is a Yorkshire lass and grew up in an extended family. “**I was always the tomboy,**” she remembers, “out playing, riding my bike, building dens.” Volunteer work as a teenager laid the foundation for later career choices, much of which was with children and families. This included work in children’s homes, residential schools and supporting children on the autistic spectrum.

Tricia found out about Dyscover when she searched for local jobs “I hadn’t heard of aphasia,” she says, “but once I had done a little research, I was excited about the idea of working in an area that could **have such a positive impact on people’s lives.**”

At Dyscover Tricia enjoys the challenge of developing new ways of communicating, but wishes she could draw better! She loves the variety of experience and interests that members bring to the groups and their willingness to share. While working from home, she has **contacted members by telephone, Skype and Zoom.**

Tricia and husband Peter have two children in their twenties. Peter is a Property Director for a national health care charity, Chris works for the World Wildlife Fund and Steph is a Speech and Language Therapist.

Hobbies include gardening and baking. “Life wouldn’t be the same without Bertie, my Mini Schnauzer,” adds Tricia, “**he keeps my daily step count well above average!**”

Around Dyscover

Future plans

Working through the pandemic has brought many surprises:

Dyscover's centres have been closed for six months, but our *services have expanded and developed more in this short period than ever before.*

Staff, volunteers, members and relatives have adapted to new ways to communicate and connect online.

Our model of 'different groups for different needs' has proved a firm foundation for Dyscover at Home.

We will restart face to face groups at Dyscover as soon as it is safe to do so. When we conducted a survey in July, **32% of members told us they wanted to come back 'as soon as possible'. 53% said they were 'cautious'.**

Our staff are constantly reviewing the risks and benefits. We know that masks make communication difficult. Our landlords at Leatherhead and Kingston have set limits on the number of people who can use a room. As a small charity we have the flexibility and freedom **to respond to suggestions and to try out new ideas.**

Five-year strategic plan

The Trustees, together with Alice and Rosemary, have drafted a **new 5-year Strategic Plan which will include both face to face and remote support**, designed to reach more people with aphasia. **64% of members agree we should continue to use Zoom as part of the Dyscover service after the pandemic has passed.**

Staff

Our nine staff members all work part time. We used the furlough scheme to help preserve funds and job roles last term and adapted to working with a smaller team from home.

"Staff have shown **great dedication and flexibility**," said Alice. "Many juggled work with child care and home schooling. We were happy to welcome back Caroline, Liz and Helena for the Autumn term."

There was a great start to the term as we were able to run a carefully managed **face to face planning session.**

There was plenty of chat and creative ideas.



Volunteers

By April, 18 volunteers had stepped up to the challenge of supporting Dyscover at Home. Some opted to help with the Zoom groups, while other supported individual members by phone.

As well as mastering the technology, we had to ensure that this new way of working was as aphasia friendly as possible. Liz and Rosemary ran fortnightly training and feedback meetings. We also benefitted from the knowledge of volunteers like Dee who is an IT professional. Dee commented: "**It seemed to come together seamlessly, staff working so hard behind the scenes to make sure they covered all aspects.**"

Liz and her daughter made sure all our volunteers received a thank-you card in Volunteers' Week.



Dyscover at Home

Triumphing with technology

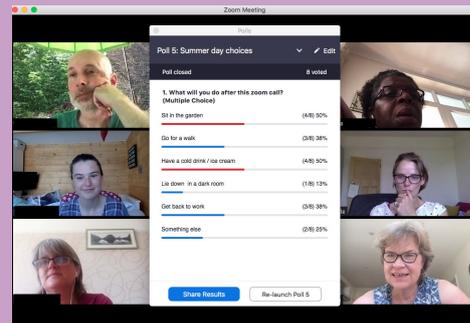
People with aphasia often feel excluded from using new technology. We knew our members needed skills and confidence to join Dyscover at Home.

We wanted to run something as close as possible to a Dyscover group, so we created aphasia friendly instructions and held trial Zoom meetings. Dr Abi Roper, who has worked with us on the INCA project, was a great help.

During the term members, staff and volunteers developed their confidence and expertise. Screen sharing became a regular part of the groups.

Zoom allows us to offer new groups to people who don't live in the same area, and to include those who have no transport.

Zoom 'breakout rooms' allow large groups to be divided for easier conversations. Members with little or no speech can make their opinions known by 'annotating a screen' or voting in a poll.



Survey Monkey

This year we had to rethink the way we ran our satisfaction questionnaire.

Encouraged by members' ability to use new technology, we decided to use the online 'Survey Monkey' app to engage with Dyscover's beneficiaries. Rosemary said, "Survey Monkey allowed us to create an aphasia friendly set of questions which 42 members and 40 relatives answered. This gave useful feedback to help us evaluate our services, and to plan ahead."

Some of the main survey findings

97% rated Dyscover as excellent or very good

82% described Dyscover as professional

87% described Dyscover as reliable

74% said Dyscover at Home gave them something to look forward to

64% said Dyscover at Home helped them feel connected

84% said they were extremely or very likely to sign up for Dyscover at Home next term

iPad loan

We have loaned out some of our iPads to members who wanted to join Zoom groups. Staff and volunteers have offered one-to-one sessions to build skills in this new technology. Members were delighted to see some much missed faces joining the groups.



Virtual open morning

In place of our open mornings at Leatherhead and Kingston, we offered a Zoom session. Three NHS Speech and Language Therapists and one prospective volunteer met Rosemary and four Dyscover members. They learnt about Dyscover at Home, and how individuals have benefitted from the support.

WhatsApp

Many of the weekly groups are also connected on WhatsApp. Members can share their news through short texts, emojis and photos. Staff can give reminders and tech support when needed.

Dyscover at Home

New referrals

With many NHS services on pause, we have found ourselves busy answering calls from people recovering from quite recent strokes. They **need support to understand and cope with their aphasia.**



Conversations are very hard for people with severe communication problems. Gayle and Rosemary have worked with six couples, giving **individual conversation partner training** over four Zoom sessions. The Stonegate Foundation has kindly subsidised this service.

We also ran a group for six **people with mild aphasia**, and have recently offered a 'welcome group' for four more. Here they met Joan and Paul, members who were able to share their stories and **give encouragement and hope.**

Topics and Tips

430 copies of 'Topics and Tips' were sent to 75 households last term.

They featured **'better conversations tips'** and suggested ways to maintain wellbeing.

Also included were **topics of conversation and news** to promote conversation at home and in Dyscover groups and phone calls.



Lockdown diaries

We invited members to tell us how they had spent time during lockdown by answering three questions:

- What helped you relax?
- Can you name one good thing that happened?
- What are you looking forward to?



JOAN
Helped me relax
'Audible' books, family tree, walking dog
One good thing
cupboards thoroughly sorted
Looking forward to
hugging my family



PATRICK
Helped me relax
outside space, garden, short walks
One good thing
seeing grandson for first proper time
Looking forward to
going to Greece



PAUL
Helped me relax
driving mobility scooter
One good thing
Dyscover Zoom for video chats
Looking forward to
Seeing Dyscover friends, staff and volunteers again



BRYAN
Helped me relax
listening to music
One good thing
talking to grandson on WhatsApp
Looking forward to
going out for a meal



MICK
Helped me relax
using scooter, watching sport on TV when it returned
One good thing
getting to know neighbours better
Looking forward to
Seeing much more of family

Have you Heard

Elaine's reading group

Elaine's aphasia **affected her reading** and is one of the most frustrating consequences of her stroke. It is an obstacle to returning to work and supporting her children's education. Through practice and determination, Elaine has made progress and was keen to **support others in a similar position**.

With help from Rosemary, she recruited three members and has led weekly sessions over Zoom. Elaine finds the preparation and leadership rewarding and has been encouraged by the

members who **are finding the sessions stimulating and useful**.

They plan to continue this term.



Gardeners are back

Our landlords allowed us to **restart gardening** in the Leatherhead courtyard in July. Led by Sue, we could have three additional volunteers in the garden, following social distancing and hygiene guidelines. Not every visit enjoyed sunny weather. They were also there, well wrapped up, **in the aftermath of Storm Francis**.



'Live' training session

Kim and her physio team at Surrey Hills Rehab have become regular partners of Dyscover. They hosted our Cranleigh group last year, and more recently devised and delivered an **AphasiaFit exercise class for our summer activities** programme.

Kim asked Rosemary to visit SHR headquarters in Cranleigh to **train a group of physios and support staff**. "We are keen to forge partnerships with similar organisations and look forward to working more with SHR," said Rosemary.



Golf is on!

As an outdoor sporting activity, **golf is still permitted**. Eight members attended the first of 10 sessions at



Leatherhead Golf course, under the leadership of coach Karl. "**It was a joy to be back,**" said Suzanne.

Frances' epic challenge

It is over 18 months since Frances Wood embarked on the 288 mile Cornwall section of the peninsula coast path. She planned the challenge to mark Dyscover's 25th birthday. The walk was

interrupted by the pandemic, but Frances **finally reached Plymouth on 16th September**, to be greeted by champagne, balloons and a banner. Frances smashed her target of £2,500, **raising an incredible £6,502**.



Fundraising

My Ride London

Dyscover had four places secured in this year's Prudential Ride London. When it was replaced by 'FreeCycle' - any route any distance - **Rosemary set herself the challenge of cycling solo to Brighton and back.** The distance was 72 miles, split over two days.



She was **staggered by the amount of support** in donations - and was even sponsored by fellow customers at a coffee stop! Says Rosemary, "I am delighted to have raised nearly £1,900." That is almost half of what we hoped to raise in the Ride London event.

Rotary laptops

Our grateful thanks to Epsom, Banstead and Ashted Rotary Clubs who **funded four new laptops.** These were used by our staff to deliver the Dyscover at Home programme.



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.

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 2021.**

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

The Challenges kept coming

An amazing number of people raised money for us through the 2.6 Challenge which replaced the London Marathon. The grand total is over £4,500!

Our President Gill (top photo) far exceeded her target of walking 2.6 miles for 26 days. Her incredible total was 105 miles and she raised almost £3,000. **Member Brian** achieved 26 laps of his front garden. He even did an extra lap and made £503. **Member Elaine** read for 26 minutes for 26 days. She not only raised £600, but raised awareness of aphasia through her Facebook posts.



Marathon raffle

Our London Marathon runner Jo Curtis has had her place deferred until next year. But she is running the Virtual London Marathon on 4th October this year, doing 26 miles from her home in Fetcham.



She is also running an online raffle to raise even more for Dyscover and has lined up some fantastic prizes. Tickets are £5 for 5 (minimum donation) and £1 per ticket thereafter. Donate at <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/JoCurtis8>. Leave your name and Jo will allocate your tickets. Gift Aid is not permissible on raffle donations.

Holiday Activities

Zoom into summer

Many thanks to Suzanne for organising such a full programme of summer activities on Zoom - 13 in all, creative, social and physical!

Volunteer Anne, who helped at four activities, said: "The activities worked very well on Zoom and **proved that we can still have a great deal of fun.**"

CREATIVE

Photography

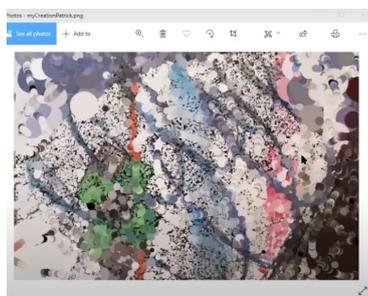
Dyscover member Paul wrote and **presented his own Zoom session.** He used slides to show members the keys to success with macro, landscape and portrait photos.



Paul said it was a challenge to make things easy for everyone to understand, but he obviously succeeded. Maggie said, "**Brilliant, you have inspired me.**" Sarah emailed, "You put so much work into your slides. Thanks for the many tips and the inspiring photos."

Technology

Thanks to Dr Abi Roper for leading a creative session that used **computer apps to produce poetry and art.**



Music

Elizabeth from Chiltern Music Therapy ran two sessions. They were **fully interactive** with musical sequencing, rhythm copying and plenty of singing.

Art

Alison led two classes, the first drawing a cup in pencil and the second a bowl of spaghetti bolognese. Trish said, "**It was fantastic, marvellous fun.**"



SOCIAL

Quiz

We ran a quiz for teams of four. The subject was Living Creatures, with topics ranging from deep sea creatures to prehistoric and extinct species. Members chose their team names, which included the Rhinos, the Laughing Hyenas and Brains - who went on to win.

Conversation

Gill led a session on generations. Members enjoyed **sharing information about grandparents.** Nearly everyone had photos to show on the screen and managed to share details.

MEDITATION

Counsellor and Dyscover volunteer Julie Upson led a very relaxing session. Everyone felt that they had learnt **techniques that would be useful in their daily lives.**

PHYSICAL

Pilates

Natalie ran two sessions of **seated Pilates.** It is adaptable to many abilities. The verdict: "exhausting but good."



AphasiaFit

Kim Wilson's session was designed for **post-stroke activity.** The theme was 'Olympic sports' to energise the body.



CONTACT US

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