

## **Speech and Language Therapy Department Aphasia Information Leaflet**

You have been given this leaflet because you or someone you know has aphasia (a language difficulty). This leaflet will explain the possible symptoms of aphasia and what you can do to help.

### **What is aphasia?**

Aphasia (also referred to as 'dysphasia') is a language problem caused by damage to the communication centres of the brain. Depending upon the area of damage, aphasia can affect a person's understanding, speaking, reading and writing. Often, all of these areas are affected to some extent, but some may be more impaired than others.

Symptoms of aphasia include:

- Difficulty understanding spoken language.
- Difficulty expressing thoughts and feelings.
- Using incorrect or jumbled words.
- Using words in the wrong order.
- Word-finding difficulties.
- Difficulty [reading](#) or writing.
- Difficulty with numbers.

### **What can I do to help a person with aphasia?**

A person with aphasia needs support and encouragement with their communication. Friends and family can help in the following ways:

#### **General points**

- Show patience and understanding.
- Be aware that the person may tire easily.
- Reduce distractions and background noise.
- Give the person plenty of time.
- Talk to the person as an adult and be aware that they may be embarrassed by their difficulties.
- Check that the person is wearing their hearing aids, glasses or dentures.

### **Helping the person's understanding**

- One-to-one conversations may be easier to follow than group conversation.
- Face the person as you speak, and ensure you have their attention.

- Keep the conversation simple and familiar.
- Avoid sudden changes of topic and complicated ideas.
- Talk slowly and clearly but without shouting.
- Use short sentences – use pauses to break up long sentences.
- Provide additional clues as you talk e.g. gesture, facial expression.
- Use props, such as maps, photographs, calendars.
- Check that the person has understood and repeat or rephrase if necessary.

## **Helping the person to express themselves**

- Allow the person plenty of time to get their message across.
- Encourage the person to use other forms of communication to support their speech, e.g. gesture, writing, drawing.
- Help the person to join in the conversation by asking questions that can be answered with simple responses.
- If the person has word-finding difficulties, encourage them to:
  - Describe the item or say what it is used for.
  - Write it down/ draw it/ gesture it.
- Try not to finish the person's sentences, as this can be annoying for them.
- Be honest if you have not understood the person.
- Consider returning to a topic later if the person gets 'stuck'.

## **Where can I go for more information?**

Your local speech and language therapist will be able to provide you with more information about aphasia.

## **Further Resources:**

Copies of the following books are available for loan from the Speech and Language Therapy Department:

### **The Stroke and Aphasia Handbook**

Provides easy to understand information on all aspects of life following a stroke.

## **Useful Organisations**

### **Speakability**

Provides resources for people affected by aphasia

1 Royal Street,  
London SE1 7LL  
Helpline: 0808 808 9572

Website: [www.speakability.org.uk](http://www.speakability.org.uk)

### **Stroke Association**

Provides information and advice on all aspects of stroke

Stroke House  
240 City Road, London, EC1V 2PR  
Tel: 020 7566 0300

Stroke Helpline: 0845 3033 100

Website: [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)