This leaflet contains information about aphasia and general speech and language therapy advice for patients and carers.

**What is Aphasia?**
- Aphasia (sometimes also called ‘dysphasia’) affects a person’s ability to communicate with others
- Aphasia is caused by damage to the areas of the brain that are responsible for speech and language
- Aphasia is commonly caused by stroke.
- Other causes of aphasia include injury to the brain, infections and inflammations of the brain, and tumours in the brain

**How does it affect a person?**
It is important to understand that aphasia can affect people in different ways and varies in severity. Here are some examples of how individuals may be affected:

**Expression:**
- Some people may have no speech at all or just a few words
- Other people may talk a lot, but what they say is hard to follow, or does not make sense
- A person may get stuck on certain words and repeat them, or the wrong word may come out
- Writing or gesture may be affected in the same way, for example, spelling can be difficult

**Understanding:**
- A person may have difficulties understanding words and conversations
- It may be difficult to understand objects and pictures
- It may be difficult to understand questions or follow requests
- There may also be problems with reading
- Yes and no responses may not always be right and may vary day to day
What can you do to help communication?
To help *talking*, you can try the following:

- be patient - allow plenty of time to respond
- encourage all attempts at communication e.g. drawing, gesture, writing
- acknowledge difficulty and frustration
- watch for and encourage facial expression and gestures, such as a nod or shake of the head
- ask questions that require short responses such as yes/no.

To help *understanding*, you can try the following:

- ensure that you have the person’s attention and that all distractions are minimised
- speak slowly and clearly, but don’t exaggerate or shout
- keep sentences and instructions short and simple
- use gestures and facial expression to demonstrate your message
- use objects and photos to provide more information about your message. Talk in a relaxed manner in a quiet room

**IMPORTANTLY**

- Do not speak about the person as though he/she is not there.
- Be honest – admit when the message has not been understood.
- Be flexible – try different ways to get ideas in and out
- Make sure glasses and hearing aids are worn if appropriate
- Even when using the above strategies, communication may not be successful. Acknowledge that you have both tried hard and try again later.

**Speech and language therapy:**

- Speech and language therapists assess people’s speech, language and communication needs, and identify areas of skill
- Speech and language therapists will provide advice for the person and their relatives to encourage them to communicate more successfully in their daily lives.
- We do this by looking at the impact of communication difficulties upon a person’s day to day life
- We jointly set goals with the person and their families to work towards in therapy
• Therapy may be direct (1:1 with the person), in a group, or through education and training to carers
• It is important to note that people having speech and language therapy are usually given tasks or exercises to practice at home/outside the clinic sessions
• Commitment to carrying out tasks and exercises provided makes the therapy more effective

Useful websites:
• www.stroke.org.uk
• www.ukconnect.org
• www.differentstrokes.co.uk
• www.headway.org.uk
• www.sltgwentabhb.wales.nhs.uk

We hope you find this leaflet useful. If you need further information about the speech and language therapy service or would like to make any comments or suggestions, please visit our website or contact:-

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