

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Connect training project

Approximately 25 Communications Champions were trained last week through a joint project between the North East and South London Cardiac and Stroke networks and Connect: the Communication Disability Network. The session provided information on how to make healthcare services accessible to those with communication disabilities, such as stroke survivors with aphasia.

Participants from a wide range of roles, including social workers, speech and language therapists, nurses, healthcare assistants, volunteers and health advocates, gathered for two days of practical training from Connect. The project serves to equip the new communications champions with the skills, techniques and resources needed to cascade their knowledge at least three times to their colleagues. Over the course of the project the champions will work with the networks to evaluate its impact.

The training opened with a discussion of communications disability and how the techniques and tools from the training could be used to improve communication access for all service users - not just stroke survivors. A triangle depicting documents, interactions and environment provides the three points that must be considered when improving communication access. Stories and videos from patients with aphasia reinforced the lessons in the training and the importance of making sure services are accessible to everyone.

The feedback from the training was extremely positive. The networks will continue to support the new champions and share the learning from this project as broadly as possible.

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Notes to editors:

- If you would like more information on this exciting project, please contact Alice Jenner, senior project manager at the South London Cardiac and Stroke Network (020 8812 5950 or info@slcsn.nhs.uk) or Mary Pointer, Collaborative Rehab Lead at the North East London Cardiac and Stroke Network (07506 121009 or marypointer@nhs.net).
- There are about 2.5 million people in the UK who live with different difficulties affecting speech, language and literacy. Examples include people with head injuries, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and aphasia, which is usually caused by stroke. There are currently about 250,000 people with aphasia in the UK.
- Connect, the Communication Disability Network is a charity for people living with aphasia, a communication disability which usually occurs after stroke. They aim to improve the lives of people living with aphasia and communication disability, equipping them to re-connect with life. Details are available on their website, www.ukconnect.org.

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