

# Using EVA Park to Deliver Social Support Groups for People with Aphasia: A Novel Application of Virtual Reality

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### INTRODUCTION:

People with aphasia report reduced social networks, lower levels of social activity than their age matched peers and lower quality of life than stroke survivors without aphasia. Groups are a platform for natural communication and humour and a potential forum for increasing social connectedness and rebuilding a sense of self.

This study investigated:

1. Whether it is feasible to deliver group social support to people with aphasia via a multi-user, virtual reality platform.
2. The effects of intervention on outcome measures of wellbeing, communication, social connectedness, language and quality of life.
3. The cost of the intervention

### METHODS:



Four stroke groups were recruited from across the UK. Each group received 14 group support sessions, fortnightly over 6 months. Effects of intervention were explored using a waitlist randomised controlled design.



# Is it feasible to deliver group social support to people with aphasia via a multi-user virtual reality platform?



### RESULTS:

1. Feasibility findings were good. 34 people with aphasia were recruited and 85.3% completed intervention. All groups ran the 14 sessions as planned, and participants attended a mean of 81.6% of sessions. Fidelity checking showed minimal drift from the manualised intervention.
2. No significant change was observed on any of the outcome measures.
3. Costs varied across the four groups, from £7,483 - £12,562, depending on travel costs (for training), the relative contributions of volunteers and the number of hardware loans that were needed.

### CONCLUSIONS:

The results suggest that a larger trial of remote group support, using virtual reality, would be merited. However the treatment content and regime, and the selection of outcome measures should be reviewed before conducting the trial.

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