

CAHPR South West

Small Grants Scheme



Laura Cook

Which conference/study day did you attend?

With the support of funding from CAHPR South West, I was able to attend the British Aphasiology Society (BAS) International Conference at the National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery in September 2023. I am a music therapist and lead the Bath Aphasia Choir and specialise in working with people with aphasia (communication difficulties after stroke or brain injury), and at the conference I presented a pre-recorded video of the choir singing a song they had written about their experiences of having aphasia and interviews with some of the choir members.

What were the benefits of attending?

BAS conferences tend to be primarily attended by Speech and Language Therapists, and I have presented at previous BAS events where there has been a huge interest in music therapy and aphasia choirs. The funding allowed me to attend the event in person, and network with interdisciplinary colleagues and researchers during the breaks. I spoke with an SLT from the University of East Anglia who was considering setting up an aphasia choir run by SLT students and was delighted to see that this choir will be starting next year!

What did you learn and how will you use that learning?

I was very interested in the results presented by Professor Marion Brady of a meta-analysis looking at the predictors of recovery from aphasia using data from individual participants, which added to the growing amount of evidence for high intensity therapy to optimise language recovery. I will use this to plan therapeutic input and schedules with individuals with aphasia more efficiently. There were also some fascinating findings into the biggest challenges for people with aphasia from focus groups facilitated by Australian researchers at Communication Connect. I hope to

develop further research into how music therapy and aphasia choirs can meet these needs in future.