

blether

*The biannual newsletter of the British Stammering Association Scotland
www.stammering.org/scotland
Issue 3 Spring 2006*

A Mann's a man...

It was a great pleasure to be elected as the new Convenor of BSA Scotland and, though a wee bit hectic to say the least, I have thoroughly enjoyed my six months so far as the High Heid Yin. From the Birnam Open Day, when I gave the welcome address, to establishing the newly elected BSA Scotland Committee and highlighting stammering in the Scottish Parliament, a lot has been achieved – and it would be fair to say there are more exciting times to come. I hope I can build on the success of my predecessor, Frank Geoghegan-Quinn (ably assisted by members of the inaugural Steering Committee and Jan Anderson) to further develop the Scottish Branch and really make a difference to the lives of people in Scotland who stammer.

I guess you would like to know a bit more about me and my hopes for BSA Scotland. I have stammered since I was seven years old. I am 36 now and have become quite good at overt stammering (trying to hide it being akin to hiding a football under a rug!) I have many years' experience of speech therapy (mostly in the

NHS) and enjoy helping run the self-help group in Glasgow.

As a result of my experiences, I know there is still a lot to do in terms of raising awareness of stammering in Scotland. Many children and adults who stammer, particularly in rural areas, find it difficult to access speech therapy or other forms of support. It is also clear that the time allocated to stammering in the training of speech and language therapists is limited and there is sometimes a poor understanding of stammering amongst health professionals.

BSA Scotland continues to play an important role in: raising awareness of stammering in Scotland; ensuring that those in the Scottish Parliament are aware of the needs of people affected by stammering; delivering events and helping to improve services.

Working as the BSA Scotland Committee, I am confident we can strengthen our profile, extend our reach and make a real and lasting difference to people in

Scotland who stammer.

In this issue I hope you will enjoy reading about BSA Scotland initiatives to raise awareness and provide support.

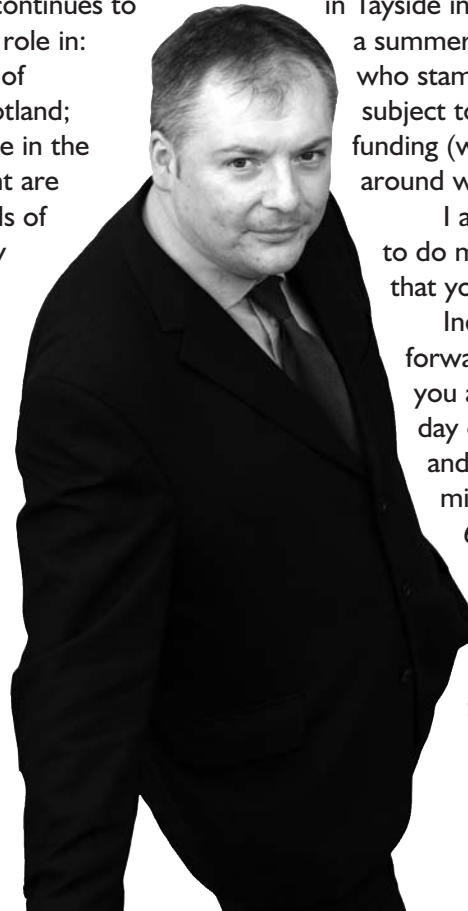
We have initiated a range of opportunities for people who stammer to access mutual support, including our open days, a drama workshop, the summer social and fundraising weekend at Knoydart, our telephone support group and the on-line community.

We are increasing our focus on children and plan a special open day for children and young people in Tayside in the autumn and a summer camp for kids who stammer next year, subject to attracting funding (why wasn't that around when I was wee?)

I am certainly ready to do my bit and I hope that you will do yours.

Indeed, I look forward to meeting you at the next open day or social event and if you're of a mind (and it's after 6 o'clock), mine's a whisky.

**John Mann
Convenor BSA
Scotland**



BSA Scotland Committee news

Since the last issue, John Mann (Glasgow) has been elected Convenor and Sandra Stewart (Aberdeen) has taken the role of Deputy Convenor. These positions will be re-negotiated annually.

Liz O'Connell, specialist speech and language therapist and team leader of the Yorkhill Dysfluency Team, and Robert Sedgley (Glasgow) were co-opted at the first meeting of the new committee.

At its first meeting, the new committee decided to establish several sub-committees in order to progress its agenda more effectively.

The *strategy and policy* committee has been clarifying how future BSA Scotland projects will be managed and considering training needs.

The *projects* committee has been considering a range of potential projects, the current front runner being a summer camp for stammering children in 2007, combining specialist speech therapy input and outdoor activities (see page 5). Other proposals include a joint initiative with TAG Theatre Company, a leaflet/CD for nurseries and a training CD for speech and language therapy students. Two therapist members of the committee, Carolyn Allen and Liz O'Connell, have been awarded a Scottish Executive travel scholarship to explore how telehealth is used in stammering therapy in Canada. We await their feedback with great interest.

The *events* committee was behind the innovative programme outlined in this issue (see page 3).

BSA Scotland Elections

Two three-year places are up for election this summer. All BSA members living in Scotland can nominate themselves for election (adults who stammer, parents of stammering children and speech and language therapists). The BSA Scotland Committee serves to guide and support the activities of the Scottish Branch. Committee members attend two Saturday meetings per annum (Spring and Autumn), participate on at least one sub-committee and are encouraged to attend, where possible, BSA Scotland events.

Self-nomination forms are available from the BSA Scotland office or via the BSA website (see page 8). Nominations close on 23 June. If there are more nominations than places, a postal election will be held over the summer. Successful candidates will take their place on the BSA Scotland Committee at its meeting on 7 October.

Scottish Parliament debate on Communication Impairment

Stammering featured prominently in a members' debate on Communication Impairment in the Scottish Parliament on 19 January 2006.

The debate, proposed by Nanette Milne MSP, took place on the day after the launch of the Scottish training CD Roms for schools. Ken Mackintosh MSP, who spoke at the CD Rom launch, dedicated his entire contribution to the debate to speaking about stammering. But this was not all – several other speakers highlighted stammering thanks to the efforts of BSA members and activists who contacted their MSPs in advance of the occasion. Claire Pirnie, Chair of the Edinburgh Stammering Support Group, was quoted by her constituency MSP, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, and was invited to meet him after the debate. This was truly a great moment for people who stammer in Scotland. Stammering was mentioned by contributors from across the political spectrum a staggering 19 times! This clearly demonstrates that we can make ourselves heard in the Scottish Parliament.

Minister for Communities, Malcolm Chisholm, confirmed that research on Communication Impairment will be commissioned by the Scottish Executive in the near future. We commend the speech and language therapy managers and Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists who have built support for the research over a long time – and rejoice that, given the profile of stammering in the debate, we can hopefully expect that the interests of children and adults who stammer will be taken fully into account.

BSA Scotland speaks out at Parliamentary reception



John Mann and Communities Minister, Malcolm Chisholm with representatives from Different Strokes.

Jan Anderson, BSA Scotland Development Manager, was invited to speak about partnership working with The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) at their reception in the Scottish Parliament on 1 February 2006. At this event, attended by The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm), selected MSPs, RCSLT representatives, speech and language therapy managers and voluntary organisations, Jan spoke about the achievements of BSA Scotland and the benefits of uniting with RCSLT and relevant voluntary organisations under the umbrella of the Communication Forum for Scotland.

John Mann, BSA Scotland Convenor, also attended and both welcomed the opportunity for networking and keeping stammering on the agenda of all these groups. Other voluntary organisations represented included: Speakability, Different Strokes, the Chest Heart and Stroke Association, ICAN, Afasic and Deaf Blind Scotland.

Mellow drama...

TAG Theatre Company, in conjunction with the British Stammering Association Scotland, is holding a drama discovery workshop. This fun session offers a space to explore drama through games, discussion and improvisation.

Come along to explore and enjoy a new take on familiar scenarios. Find it challenging to order your skinny de-caff latte? Then try it again, as if you rule the world!

As TAG is a youth-oriented theatre, this workshop is particularly aimed at age 18-25, though enthusiastic would-be

participants of any age should also apply. Everyone is welcome to come along and give drama a go in a warm supportive atmosphere. No experience is needed, just the willingness to join in and enjoy yourself.

Held in the historic Citizens' Theatre, you will also have a chance to explore this exciting building, accessing spaces hidden from the audience's eyes.

A short coffee break with refreshments will be provided.

Date: Saturday 6 May

Time: 11am-1.30pm

Venue: Citizens Theatre, 119 Gorbals Street, G5 9DS

Meeting point: Foyer, at 10.45am

Directions: 15 minutes walk from Central and Queen's Street stations or 10 minutes walk from Argyle Street station or Bridge Street Underground, numerous buses stop outside. The theatre is fully accessible.

If you are interested, please contact: Jan Anderson, BSA Scotland

Mail: bsascotland@stammering.org

Call: 08453 303 800

Text: 07786 080 938

Or

Lulu Black, TAG

Mail: lulu.black@tag-theatre.co.uk

Wilderness weekend at Knoydart

BSA Scotland is holding a summer social and fundraising weekend from 23-25 June on the Knoydart peninsula in north-west Scotland – Britain's last mainland wilderness.

This long weekend is for people who stammer, spouses, partners, friends and therapists.

Join us for walking and talking in stunning scenery, communal catering and trips to the only pub on the peninsula. Walk towards isolation in fellowship and let's see what we find.

For the more adventurous, we propose a sponsored hill walk up Scotland's most remote Munro, Ladhar Bheinn, with funds raised for BSA Scotland, while less rugged types can

enjoy leisurely rambles and wildlife watching.

Knoydart has not been chosen for accessibility but rather for its reputation as a beautiful and memorable place to visit. We hope that members and friends will catch the spirit of this adventure and decide to join us.

Travel to Knoydart involves catching the local ferry from Mallaig to Inverie. Trains are available from Glasgow to Mallaig or you can drive there and leave your car in a long stay car park. We shall aim to catch the ferry on Friday at 2.15pm and will be returning on a special ferry on Sunday at 2.30pm (return £20). You can, of course, stay longer if you wish.

Places are being allocated on a first come, first served basis and bookings are filling up fast. This has moved from being a tentative proposal to a definite plan.

We will be taking over the Knoydart Foundation bunkhouse with budget accommodation at £10pp/pn. More luxurious options are also available.

We can offer communal catering for up to 25 people for Friday and Saturday dinners and packed lunches for walkers, all food costs, approximately £15. Sunday lunch at the award winning real food/real ale pub is also on the agenda.

If you are moved to join us, get in touch quick! Either by calling or e-mailing the BSA Scotland office (details on the back page).

Voyage of discovery for children who stammer

BSA Scotland and Tayside speech and language therapists are proposing to hold an Open Day for children and young people who stammer from across Scotland – we hope that stammering children, their parents, speech and language therapists and other interested professionals from a wide area will travel to attend.

The key aims are to provide a positive experience for children and young people who stammer, to provide mutual support and professional advice for parents, and to provide support and inspiration to speech and language

therapists and other interested professionals.

The programme will include plenaries and workshops, with proposed topics such as:

- inspiring testimonies from young adults who stammer
- Scottish CD Roms for schools
- Discussion groups for parents
- Art workshop for children and young people
- Design the BSA Scotland 2006 Christmas card
- Speaking circle for children and young people
- Drama workshop

– Meet BSA Scotland and give us feedback

- Meet a specialist speech and language therapist
- and more ...

If you have an idea for a workshop you would like to see, or if you would like to offer a workshop, please contact BSA Scotland (details on page 8).

Date: 28 October 2006

Venue: Tayside, location to be confirmed.

Further details will be confirmed/published in future mailings of BSA/BSA Scotland and on the BSA website.

Blether

“Hello from your southern correspondent, writing to you from a snow swept Dumfries in the middle of March! Jan asked me a few weeks ago to write some scribbles about the Birnam Open Day as a comparative newbie to the whole BSA Scotland thing. Speaking from the heart, I can say, without fear of contradiction, that ... it was a blast.

As usual with anything speech-related I was in turn:

a) terrified at the prospect of what the day would hold (was I going to be sucked

felt interesting and relevant, especially the parent and child sessions. Once upon a time I was that child and those experiences were mine.

The Speaking Circle was great, as was the workshop on the Alexander Technique – but best of all was the time between sessions. This was time for meeting people, hearing their stories, learning what life had thrown at them and how they had come out the other side; coping, living and loving as best they could. It made me feel quite humble and, quite frankly, lost for words.”

William Howat

Birnam was a blast!

into giving time, and maybe money, to an organisation with few people involved who would leap gratefully upon anyone who showed any bit of interest?)

b) afraid I would embarrass myself by visibly showing irritation with anyone who blocked more than I did

c) mortified at having to ask directions to Birnam, never mind the actual venue.

I woke on 8 October at 6am with a heavy heart and a doom-laden expectation of what was ahead.

For a single guy of a certain age who knew no-one in the room and felt he could stammer for Scotland, the day went well. Every part of the programme

Around 50 participants attended ‘Speaking from the heart’, the Birnam Open Day – a good mix of adults who stammer, children, parents, grandparents, spouses and partners, friends, speech therapists and more ...

The day opened with an introduction by BSA Scotland Convenor, John Mann, followed by short speeches from John McAllion (former MP and MSP for Dundee East and BSA Patron) and Cllr Gordon Hunter (Convenor for Housing and Health at Perth & Kinross Council).

The morning programme included three testimonies from people who stammer and a workshop that allowed all participants to

share their stories.

David Lilburn described his experience of medical school and ultimate triumph on achieving excellent grades for his final oral exam.

John Mann spoke about working for a supportive employer and developing his career.

Claire Pirnie recounted poignant, funny tales about avoiding stammering and described her recent progress towards being more up front.

Afternoon workshops included: Avoidance Reduction Therapy, Speaking Circles, art workshops, Alexander

Technique and more. Parents had an opportunity to speak to specialist speech and language therapists and each other, as well as discussing the Lidcombe programme and our new CD Rom resource for Scottish schools. Partners and spouses valued attending – so we hope to hold a workshop specifically for them at a future event.

The day ended with the first Annual Members’ ‘Gaitherin’ at which Frank Geoghegan-Quinn gave a round up of the past year before handing over to the new committee.

The learning and sharing carried on over the rest of the weekend for those who stayed for the informal social programme. Local member John Boyd and his band played excellent music in a local folk bar and Sunday was rounded off with a five-mile walk-and-talk in local woodlands, during which the event was reviewed and plans for the future unfurled.

Scottish CD Roms launched

Our Scottish Executive funded training CD Roms for Scottish schools were formally launched on 18 January at the Edinburgh City Chambers. They have since been distributed to all primary, secondary and special schools across Scotland, and to all speech and language therapy departments. BSA Education Officer, Cherry Hughes, who conducted the project, is currently collating initial feedback from schools which, to date, has been overwhelmingly positive.

The launch was designed to acknowledge the commitment and courage of the stammering children who agreed to be filmed in realistic classroom scenes, as well as non-stammering pupils and staff from Crookfur Primary and Eastwood High, East Renfrewshire, and speech therapists who participated in filming. All children received a certificate of achievement from Kenneth McIntosh MSP/Education Committee. The Scots choir from Torphichen Primary performed songs that feature in the CDs and were also honoured for their contribution.

The CDs feature video clips of children who stammer speaking directly to camera as well as typical classroom scenes. These are supplemented by comprehensive printable text. Copies can be purchased from BSA for £12.99 each.



Staff and pupils from Crookfur Primary and Eastwood High received certificates of achievement from Kenneth McIntosh MSP (back row, third from left). Eddie Phillips, BSA Vice Chair, member of the BSA Scotland Committee and East Renfrewshire Cllr is back row, 4th left.

Am I bovvered?

When Ronnie Barker died in October of last year there was, quite rightly, an outpouring of praise for his talents as a comic writer and actor. I have never been the same since seeing 'The Phantom Raspberry Blower of Old London Town' back in the 70s, and the words 'four candles' bring a smile to my face even now. However, I always had a problem with Mr Barker, and that problem was Arkwright in 'Open All Hours'.

As a much loved national figure, Barker could seemingly do no wrong. Whilst it is true that Norman Stanley Fletcher from 'Porridge' has entered the annals of comic history, I for one hope that Arkwright disappears without trace (no real chance of that as the BBC constantly repeats the blasted thing). Is it me? Am I the only person in Britain who thinks it is truly shocking that millions of our fellow citizens can gain so much pleasure from laughing at a person who stammers?

It can't all be blamed on Roy Clarke (though it depresses me that garbage like 'Last of the Summer Wine' still gets on screen) as he

originally wrote the character of Arkwright without a stammer. It was Barker who said that he could make the character funnier by making him stutter. It seems he was right, as the show regularly garnered huge audiences and a place in the heart of many who saw it. I still maintain, however, that shows like 'Open All Hours' and films like 'A Fish Called Wanda' perpetuate negative stereotypes, reinforce utterly false preconceptions and encourage the great British public to think that the appropriate response to stammering is to laugh.

Stammering is usually ignored completely by the media and seldom if ever appears in comedy or drama. If it does, it is used as a plot device to establish a character as a bit nervous, a bit slow or a bit thick – in short as a figure of fun. The character of Ken in 'A Fish Called Wanda' is a prime example. All that is necessary for his stammer to disappear completely is to be kissed by Jamie Lee Curtis or to run over Kevin Kline with a steamroller. Not having either of these two actors to hand, I have to soldier on as best I can, perhaps by imagining that I am spit roasting

Michael Palin.

The music business is no different. I'm sure many of us remember the truly execrable 'Stutter Rap' by Morris Minor and the Majors; a Top Ten hit no less in 1986! "We've all been caught in a m-m-mouthtrap/So join with us in the st-st-st-st-st-st-stutter rap." Hilarious, I think you'll agree. But it didn't do Tony Hawks any harm, did it? He still went round Ireland with his fridge and played the Moldovans at tennis, no doubt amassing a sizeable fortune along the way.

Jimmy McGovern may be the exception that proves the rule. As a person who stammers himself, he has made an effort to put characters who stammer into his work including 'Cracker', 'Priest' and 'The Lakes'. But these are few and far between and only serve to highlight the dearth of characters with a stammer in mainstream drama.

I realise I am laying myself open to accusations of po-faced humourlessness, but I really don't care. I am fed up with people who stammer being mocked, patronised, abused or ignored by society in general and the arts in particular. We have been marginalized by the attitudes and behaviours of the general population long enough and it is time to redress the balance.

Anyone for a BAFTA?

Frank Geoghegan-Quinn

CHILDREN'S SUMMER CAMP 2007

BSA Scotland is exploring the practicalities and funding options for hosting a residential summer intensive course for children in Scotland who stammer, aged 10-14.

The course would combine specialist speech and language therapy input with outdoor activities, based on a similar scheme, first developed by The Fluency Trust in Swindon, then replicated, more recently, in Derbyshire.

The Swindon Fluency Trust proposes that the combination of challenging outdoor activities and intensive therapy are complementary in developing greater confidence, self-esteem, positive thinking and problem solving skills – all vital in dealing with the

emotional and physical challenges of stammering.

Isn't Scotland crying out for a parallel initiative? We have unrivalled opportunities for outdoor pursuits, we currently have limited specialist speech and language therapy services for children who stammer that are not accessible across Scotland, we have scattered rural populations, and kids who may never have met someone else who stammers, let alone had access to a group.

The summer camp could draw sufficient numbers to tackle this isolation and create a viable group from across Scotland.

Speech and language therapy managers have expressed support in

principle and a number of therapists working with children who stammer have indicated they would like to be involved. The course would represent an excellent skill sharing/training opportunity for participating therapists.

We would propose that a mix of specialist and non-specialist therapists would take part, bringing children from their local areas.

Outdoor education centres in Argyll and Perthshire are happy to meet our requirements and work with us to create a joined up programme.

Next, we need to raise funds. Blue sky, white water thinking ... Let us know what **you** think.

In this article BSA Scotland Committee member and specialist speech and language therapist, Carolyn Allen, and BSA member, Jim Cowan, reflect on priorities in speech therapy for stammering as they prepare to make a joint presentation at the 5th International Fluency Association World Congress in Dublin, July 2006.

The big thaw

As a speech and language therapist...

123,000 websites! That's how many results are generated from a 'Google' search using the keywords 'therapy' and 'stammering'. There are so many different approaches that it is hard to know which one will be the most effective. The debate about what kind of therapy works best is, however, not limited to the internet. This is one discussion that really gets the professionals going – there's no agreement amongst us either!

The iceberg

A popular approach in the UK is to compare stammering to an iceberg. This analogy was first developed in 1958 by an American speech pathologist and person who stammers, Dr Joseph Sheehan, and it nicely demonstrates that while we may be able to see or hear obvious speech struggle, there is no clue as to what lies beneath the surface, in terms of personal thoughts and reactions to stammering. The hidden part is unique to each individual and the size of the iceberg 'tip' does not necessarily correspond to the amount of iceberg underneath the metaphorical water line. From my experience, this model is a really clear way of understanding the whole picture of stammering, although there are many therapists around the globe who do not approach stammering in this way.

IFA conference

One of the main themes at this year's International Fluency Association's conference in Dublin is 'qualitative issues in stammering'. Examples of qualitative experience might be feelings of shame or embarrassment, or avoidance of words. These are harder for professionals to measure but no less

important for people who stammer.

This conference represents an ideal opportunity to spread the word about the iceberg. I want the international professional community to think of stammering not as a speech-only disorder but rather as a difficulty which, despite its common strands of blocks or repetitions, has a highly personalised impact on life.

How do I convince others to leave a

speech-based approach behind and move towards discussions about large floating chunks of frozen water? I take the evidence!

Carolyn Allen, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

As a person who stammers...

On my first visit to speech therapy I wondered, what will they do to me? Will they teach me to speak again? Will they take me seriously? What tablets will they give me? Can I do this?

I really did not have a clue what to expect. Speech therapy for me has been a life changing experience. Before therapy I was a person who was ashamed of my 'problem'. I lacked confidence in my ability. I was an embarrassment to myself. I could not listen to a person who stammered as this was so painful. When I did speak in public I became tense. I would go red in the face. I would sweat. I had no concentration. I thought people were laughing at me – and I would stammer.

I was living life in the second division.

Under the water line

The iceberg was introduced to me during my second session of therapy.

It broke stammering down into two categories:

- What was above the water line.
- What was under the water line.

By concentrating on what was underneath the water line I realised that my issue was not that I have a stammer per se, my issue was my perception of stammering and the way other people reacted to my stammer.

I really did think that I was second rate. I could not speak properly so I would stay in the background as the quiet man, afraid to speak.

I thought that when I did stammer,

this would embarrass people listening and they would think I was a stupid. I made myself a social outcast.

Understanding what was under the water line has taught me to accept my stammer.

It has given me confidence. It has made me understand more about myself. I am an effective communicator. I am a normal human being. I like myself again.

Speaking at the Conference

When I was approached with the idea of speaking at the conference in Dublin, I knew that therapy had worked and that the iceberg had almost melted away.

I am looking forward to this challenge. In fact I am excited about it. I have confidence in my ability. I will be nervous, but hey, that's normal.

The confidence I have comes from the subject matter, from understanding and dealing with what lies beneath the water line: the anguish, the hurt, the embarrassment, the fear, the hate, the guilt, the loneliness. We all can make this journey – and finally realise that having a stammer is not that bad. In fact, I would not change it now for the world.

Jim Cowan

Want to go to IFA 2006?

BSA Scotland is offering four bursaries to the value of £200 to BSA members (people who stammer or speech and language therapists) who wish to attend this year's IFA Congress. Funding should contribute towards travel, delegate and/or accommodation costs.

Visit the congress website to find out about the programme and delegate rates: <http://theifa.org/fifthifa.html> – and if you feel inspired to attend, write and let us know why we should sponsor you.

We would like sponsored delegates to take advantage of the Earlybird booking rate (pre- 28th April) and early fares so are setting an early closing date for notes of interest of 21st April. Please submit your request, detailing why you should be selected. Successful candidates will be required to write a report on their experience for Blether and/or share their learning at a BSA Scotland open day.

back to Jan. I felt like I'd just stepped off a rollercoaster!

Jan outlined strategies to use when speaking to a person who stammers. She said that all people who stammer are different, but general strategies include: being patient, maintaining eye contact, not finishing off words and not advising the speaker. She said that staff should never assume that they know best how to help the person. Everyone in the audience got a detailed BSA Scotland handout. Round two was the question and answer session.

I think the session went well. It was a good learning experience. The audience were far more receptive than I had expected. I felt quite important when I saw a man in the front row taking notes on what I was saying! I did not stammer very much as I felt in a position of authority.

We hope the information will be disseminated throughout the Royal Bank of Scotland. It would be good if BSA Scotland could become more involved in this sort of role in the future.

Claire Pirnie

Awareness raising training

BSA Scotland was contacted by the Royal Bank of Scotland after a person who stammers made a complaint that he was not treated in an appropriate manner. Jan was invited to the customer relations department to give a training session on how to best communicate with customers who stammer, and asked me to go along to give some insight into the experience of stammering.

It felt like I was going for a job interview. If I had broken down that morning I don't think Jan would have believed me! Hundreds of people in black suits made their way to work. I followed the silent cortege into one of the many Royal Bank buildings at the Gyle on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

We were met by our host and shown to our room. After introducing us, Jan began by giving some background on the work of BSA Scotland. She explained how Disability Discrimination Act legislation applies to stammering, described the stammering iceberg and

gave some statistics and facts. It was then my turn.

I faced the audience for round one. I spoke about the concealment of stammering. I told some of my own avoidance anecdotes, including being told by a friend (who knew I stammered) that I never gave a straight answer to anything. It had not occurred to my friend that I was swapping words to avoid stammering.

On a more serious note, I described how avoiding stammering is exhausting and relentless. It can mean silence. It can mean saying only what you can say, and not what you want to say. Yet, most people will avoid stammering (to some extent). I explained the main reason for this is fear of how people might react. I said it amazes me when people say: "speak slowly" or, "just relax" etc. The audience laughed when I said if it was really that simple I would not stammer! I finished by saying life would be so much easier if people who didn't stammer followed our simple advice. I handed

Join the online support group

We are two BSA Scotland members, based in Glasgow, and committed to building on the initial success of this virtual self-help group. Current membership is 26 and growing.

The e-community aims to:

- foster greater ties between people who stammer, parents, speech therapists, researchers and friends in Scotland
- provide an e-venue where members may support one another more efficiently and non-invasively
- provide alternative support for those who may not have the privilege of having a specialist speech therapist or self help group nearby as well as those too busy to seek other forms of support
- discuss interesting topics related to stammering.

For child protection reasons, only those who are aged 18 plus are allowed to participate.

How to join:

- e-mail speakingfromtheheart-subscribe@yahoo.co.uk. You will receive an e-mail requesting confirmation of your request to join. Simply reply to this e-mail by clicking 'reply' and then 'send'. You will then be notified of your new member status.
- alternatively, join via the website: <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/speakingfromtheheart>

You will receive e-mail messages posted by group members. You can decide whether to receive these as individual messages, as a daily digest, receive special notices or to view the messages via the website.

Devan Arumugam and Callum Wells

Telephone support group

This informal monthly group for people who stammer (aged 18 plus) takes place on the second Tuesday of each month, 8 to 9pm. Up to eight people can call in at the arranged time – and everyone can hear, and be heard by, everyone else.

Sessions are facilitated by BSA members, Andy Whittall (Perth) and Stephen Wilson (Musselburgh), who ensure that the group runs smoothly.

"Both of us have wrestled with stammers for most of our lives, with varying degrees of success along the way! We would like to think that we are now more or less comfortable with the way we speak, warts and all. Our aim is to provide everyone with time to speak, and to ensure a supportive audience."

Why take part?

The group offers the chance to speak (and listen) to other people who stammer. You might have something you want to discuss; speaking on the telephone might be a challenge you want to address; you might want to practice techniques; you might simply want a bit of a chat; or even just to listen. Whatever, you can feel safe in the knowledge that there are people who understand on the other end of the line.

How do I join in?

Simply phone: 0845 458 4180 at 8pm on the scheduled evening, and you will be put through to the BSA Scotland Telephone Support Group.

How much does it cost?

Not very much, all you pay for is a one hour call at your local evening call rate.

Next dates

Tuesday 11 April 06 and 9 May 06. Dates of future meetings and further information, available from the office.

Andy Whittall and Stephen Wilson

Self-help groups

Focus on Aberdeen

G rampian Stammerers Self-Help Group held its first meeting in November 2004 at the Medical School, Aberdeen University before moving, in July 2005, to one of the campuses at The Robert Gordon University. From January 2006 we have been meeting in a room at a local health centre – I hope, our final meeting place. The group meets monthly (from March, second Tuesday of the month), 7-9pm, and has a varied programme to offer.

We hope the change in venue and evening will encourage more people who stammer to attend. Since our first meeting we have had nineteen people come and go. The group has also benefited from the input of Ludo Thierry, our local speech and language therapist, who has put a tremendous amount of effort into the group and has supported the committee from its first meeting. The group is mainly an opportunity for people who stammer to get together and have a social evening although we are always willing to try out new ideas!

Speaking Circles form part of our monthly meetings, giving group members confidence to speak in front of other people – something they may have found difficult in the past. Other meetings have included Tai Chi (demonstrated by one of our members), hand aromatherapy, poetry readings, book reviews, drama, card games, cooking and quizzes. We have also had a visit from a drama teacher, giving us ideas on speaking up and different techniques.

Our social outings have included ten pin bowling, visiting

Portsoy Music Festival, a walk and picnic along the cliffs of Arbroath, a local hill climb and picnic, meals out at Christmas and evenings in members' houses. The Grampian group have been very fortunate in capturing the interest of medical students at Aberdeen University, who have attended some of our meeting and given generous donations to our group from their fund raising events. As a result of their generosity, we were able to sponsor one of our young members to attend the BSA conference in Stirling 2004.

The Grampian Group established a local steering committee, consisting of group members, speech therapists and volunteers, to help organise BSA Scotland's first Open Day at The Robert Gordon University in April 2005. This was a great success, with around 85 people attending.

Sandra Stewart

"I joined the Grampian Stammerers Self-Help Group two years ago. I have stammered since childhood and this is the first time I have joined a self-help group. The group has helped me immensely, giving me confidence to join in more conversations and to come to terms with occasional stammering with friends and colleagues, along with feeling more confident when speaking on the telephone. One of the activities which has given me confidence to speak out more is a Speaking Circle, which we all participate in when we have our meetings."

Helen Smith

For further information, please contact:

Sandra Stewart 01224 741 336 (eve)

Ludo Thierry (speech therapist) 01224 553 966 (day)

E-mail Sandra: maryfieldeast@focushealthcare.co.uk

Inverness group

We are setting up a support/self-help group in the Inverness area for people who stammer. The aim of this group is to offer a relaxed and supportive environment where people can discuss stammering and non-stammering issues alike. Please join us!

Date of first meeting: 21 June 2006

Venue: Coffee Lounge, Raigmore Hospital, Inverness

Time: 7 to 9pm

Contact: Sharon Daye (speech and language therapist) on 01463 705424
Speech and Language Therapy Dept.
Raigmore Hospital

Old Perth Road
Inverness IV2 3UJ

E-mail: Sharon.Daye@hpct.scot.nhs.uk

Word out!

Word Out! Is a support group for adults who stammer that meets on alternate Thursday evenings, 7-9pm, in the BSA Scotland office. The group provides a safe, supportive environment to practice speaking strategies or just speak about stammering. Back in September a new committee was elected, and we discussed what people wanted from the group. Some people wanted speech therapy, while others enjoyed self-led sessions. The group now offers both, alternating between therapy sessions led by specialist speech therapist Jan Anderson and self-led sessions. Through exercises such as Speaking Circles, discussions and prepared presentations we aim to develop a constructive attitude towards stammering.

In the near future we hope to have professionals along to teach us about assertiveness skills and Process Work. Session topics are open to discussion. Participation in everything we do is always voluntary. New members are always very welcome!

Claire Pirnie

Call: 07753 405 886 (Claire)

E-mail: word-out@edinburgh-stammering.org.uk

www.edinburgh-stammering.org.uk

Safety in stumblers

It has been an exciting period for the Glasgow self-help group, Safety in Stumblers. Funding from the NHS meant we were able to set up a website, print business cards and produce posters for distribution to GP surgeries and SLT departments. We hope this will attract new members and those who already know us can keep abreast of the latest developments in Safety in Stumblers and indeed the stammering world as a whole.

In recent months we have enjoyed talks by representatives from the Glasgow Speakers Club and Peter McDermott (who has extensive experience in the fields of Developmental Behaviour Modelling and NLP) and activities like Speaking Circles and group discussions on issues such as stammering and acting. The group have been getting together in a private room at Waxy O'Connor's Bar in West George Street (close to George Square). More information on the location, date and time of the next meeting of Safety in Stumblers can be found on our website.

I look forward to seeing you there.

John Mann

Call: 07956 323 957 (John)

E-mail: jg_mann@hotmail.com
www.safetyinstumblers.org.uk

blether box

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