

How support groups can help members to recognise and live well with the hidden effects of stroke

General tips

- **Seek** regular **feedback** on what's helpful and what's not.
- **Include members** in planning activities.
- **Follow up with members** who seem quiet, distracted or not themselves.
- **Co-create** with members a set of group **values** or principles aligned to the behaviours you wish to promote.
- **Signpost** to appropriate **information and support** if needed.

Tips for meeting specific needs

Fatigue

- **Consider** the **time, duration, location** and **accessibility** of the group.
- **Look** out for **signs of fatigue** e.g. red eyes, drowsiness, irritability.
- **Empower members** to say "**no**" if they feel too tired.
- Incorporate **regular breaks** before and after any activities.
- **Allow** extra **time**.

Emotional effects

- **Promote** your group as a **safe space** where members can feel comfortable sharing how they feel, without fear of being judged.
- **Follow up with members** who seem quiet, distracted or not themselves.
- **Don't judge. Listen first** before suggesting solutions.
- Don't forget to **look after yourself** too.

Memory and thinking problems

- **Minimise** background noise and **distractions**.
- Encourage members to **be patient** and give each other **time** to respond.
- **Discourage** members from **interrupting** or talking over each other.
- Splitting into **smaller groups may be helpful** for some people.
- **Allow** extra **time**.

Pain

- **Ask** what they find helpful.
- **Respect** what they can and can't do.
- Remember that **pain can fluctuate** considerably.
- **Regular breaks** may be helpful.
- Ensure members **feel comfortable to manage their pain** without fear of judgement.

Visual problems

- Don't assume. **Ask members** in advance **what they need**.

- **Ensure** that the **space**, if in a physical room, is **free of clutter**, coats, handbags, trailing wires.
- **Ask everyone to introduce themselves** at the beginning and then to say who is speaking as it changes.
- Remember, **not everyone who has a vision impairment has no useful vision** in fact most people have some vision.