

Spring 2026

Stroke News

For everyone affected by stroke

**'Together we can
make things better.'**

How Liz and her friends
are inspired to Make
May Purple for Stroke
Awareness Month

This issue:

- Goal-setting to support your recovery
- Helping someone manage their finances
- How to get involved in Stroke Voices in Research

Stroke
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Editor's letter



After a stroke, trying new things – or rediscovering old interests – can be an important part of recovery, as our cover star, Liz, shows.

Although initially nervous about joining her local Hull Talk the Stroke group, Liz (page 8) tells us how friendship and encouragement from members renewed her confidence. We also hear from the group about their 'stroke family', and why they're inspired to Make May Purple for Stroke Awareness Month.

Peter (page 20), who has numbness in his left side,

explains how learning the guitar has helped him physically and mentally. We meet Paul (page 28), who is using his love of gardening to improve his memory, and Dajan (page 38), whose stroke at age 24 inspired him to become a volunteer.

We also look at goal-setting to support recovery (page 24) and share guidance for carers on helping someone manage their finances after stroke (page 44).

Enjoy this issue – and please keep sharing your stories with us.

Christine Webster, Editor

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Over to you

I had a stroke in 2016 but, thankfully, made a good recovery. But in 2020, I had another, which left me without the use of some of my fingers and some memory loss. Then in 2022, I was admitted back into hospital with a TIA. So you can see I've been through the wars!

The strokes left me with epilepsy. For a long time, I was afraid to go out – I could not face the world. Then out of the blue, I surprised people by going out on my own.

This helped me and made me think, right, the stroke is not going to beat me.

I got a brush out and painted my gnomes. I took my time, but it helped get me out of my rut.

I'd like to send my message of hope to other stroke survivors. Take life with help and remember you're not on your own.

Ray

Stroke Support Helpline: **0303 3033 100**

Find your local services, clubs and groups: **stroke.org.uk/support**

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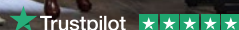


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From our Chief Executive



For over 30 years, the Stroke Association has been at the heart of discoveries that have changed what it means to survive a stroke. Today, it's more important than ever that we champion stroke as a national research priority, so it is recognised and properly supported like other major health conditions.

That's why we recently launched our 2026–2031 research strategy. Shaped by stroke survivors, healthcare professionals and researchers, it sets out our plans to continue funding talented people and high-quality projects, while ensuring new evidence reaches real-world care more quickly, to improve lives. Find out more on page 32.

With your support, we are also campaigning for increased funding and better access to

stroke care across the UK. As elections approach in Scotland and Wales, newly elected representatives will need to hear why stroke must be a priority.

You can help drive this change. Make sure you're registered to vote and join our Campaign Network (see page 16) to advocate for stroke in your area.

May is Stroke Awareness Month, and we're inviting everyone to Make May Purple to raise awareness and fund vital support for people affected by stroke. However you choose to take part – whether it's a bake sale, a quiz, or a 'dress in purple' day – you'll help more people find strength through support. Visit stroke.org.uk/stroke-awareness-month to get involved.

Juliet Bouverie OBE

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'Together, we can make things a whole lot better'

In October 2023, doctors told Liz's family that she was unlikely to survive the night after she had a major stroke.

'They said there was nothing they could do,' remembers Liz's sister, Rachael. 'But the next morning Liz was still here. She had brain surgery and was unconscious for weeks. Then, one day, I was sat with her and heard this: 'Hello, love'. I nearly fell off the chair!'

Liz was left with vision loss, weakness on her right side and speech difficulties. 'At first I couldn't walk or do anything,' says Liz. 'As I've got stronger, I'd try hard to exercise my arm, but I get tired quickly.'

'My right eye can't see properly so I'm very unsteady. Then the

words – some words come, some don't. It's very difficult.' Liz finds being unable to recall names particularly frustrating. 'Everybody was 'Rachael' for a while,' laughs Rachael. 'Even her daughter and the dog!'

A palliative care nurse, Liz was used to supporting others and initially found it hard to accept she needed help. Realising that her Derbyshire home was no longer safe or accessible, Liz moved to a level-access lodge near Rachael in Beverley. She's slowly regaining her independence – re-learning everyday tasks, such as washing



her own hair and caring for her beloved support dog, Darcy.

A big turning point in her recovery came when Liz and Rachael discovered Hull Talk the Stroke – part of our UK-wide community of support groups for stroke survivors and carers. 'At first, I was nervous about going,' says Liz. 'I cried. I refused to get out of the car.'

Eventually, Jenny, one of the group's volunteers, encouraged her to come in. 'She was so upset, but everyone welcomed

her,' says Jenny. 'Now she comes in smiling.'

'Every week, I love to come here,' says Liz. 'They've made me feel safe and helped my confidence. I feel part of a community.'

Hull Talk the Stroke was founded in 2018 by Jenny's dad, Steve, after Jenny's mum survived a devastating stroke. Struggling to find emotional and social support, Steve created a group to offer connection, encouragement, and purpose.

'Dad told new members that they just needed to find the courage to take that first step into the room,' says Jenny. 'After that, we'd do the rest.'

When Steve passed away suddenly in 2025, Jenny, supported by dedicated volunteers Mike, Susan and Gina, stepped in to lead the group. 'I want to continue his work,' she says. 'Every week, I see people gradually turning 'I can't' into 'I can't YET' into 'I can now!' It's priceless.'

Mike, the group's co-founder and longest-serving volunteer, agrees: 'The friendship and banter are second to none. Some days people stay long after the session ends because no one wants to go home.'

Stroke survivor, Doug, and his wife, Pat, attend together and call it their 'stroke family'. 'I can't wait for Thursdays,' says Doug. 'It's so much fun. If someone comes in miserable, they'll go home laughing.'



Looking for ways to keep active, the group took on our '62 miles in October' fundraising challenge. 'I wanted something everyone of all abilities could join in with,' says Jenny. 'I translated miles into steps and combined everyone's totals into one group achievement. I brought in step machines too, so those with limited movement could take part.'

'To make us feel more connected, I ordered everyone Stroke Association T-shirts. Even Darcy the dog has a purple outfit!'

Although Mike, a stroke survivor himself, was recovering from a seizure at the time, he was determined to take part. 'I started off walking 1,000 steps, then

added more each day,' says Mike. 'By the end, I was doing 10,000 steps a day. I'd walk to see group members who live nearby to get my steps in. We got quite competitive!'

'I've carried on walking since because it's helped me mentally. You've got to get yourself out and get some fresh air.'

Pat and Doug also joined in. 'We can't walk far, but we used the step machines and just walking around the house and garden clocked up the miles,' says Pat.

Together, the group achieved 1,883,394 steps (roughly 942 miles) and raised £845.



Liz only joined the group at the end of the challenge. But their determination inspired her to swap her walker for a stick instead. 'They gave me the confidence to give it a go,' she says.

The group are now preparing to 'Make May Purple' for Stroke Awareness Month with purple fundraising activities. For them, raising awareness of stroke and the importance of support is

vital. 'It's not just the stroke. It's what comes after it – everyday life is harder,' says Pat. 'At groups like this, you can talk to people who are in the same boat. It helps you come to terms with stroke.'

'We need more groups like this,' says Jenny. 'My Dad once said we give members confidence to succeed and never give up. Life may not be as we would like but together, we can make it a whole lot better.'



This Stroke Awareness Month, let's Make May Purple to raise awareness and fund vital support for all people affected by stroke. Whether you bake, walk, host or raise awareness – make it purple: stroke.org.uk/stroke-awareness-month

If you have a question or need to talk, contact our Stroke Support Helpline on 0303 3033 100 or helpline@stroke.org.uk. Or visit stroke.org.uk/services to find support near you.

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Understanding **planning** and **problem-solving**

Stroke can affect your ability to plan, problem-solve and complete tasks at home or work. These difficulties, known as problems with your 'executive function', can make daily life challenging – but there are ways to manage them.

Laura from our Stroke Support Helpline answers some common questions about this hidden effect of stroke:

What is executive function?

Executive function is the set of thinking skills that help us to plan, organise, make decisions, juggle mental tasks and recognise when something needs doing. These processes usually happen automatically, without us being aware of them, but can be disrupted by a stroke.

What are the signs of problems with executive function?

You might find it hard to:

- Work out how to do certain things – from simple tasks, like using the TV remote to change channels, to more complex ones, like making a meal. New tasks may feel especially difficult.
- Plan and think through all the steps needed to complete a task, such as making a cup of tea. Or put the steps in the right order.
- Begin or finish a task on your own without being prompted, such as getting dressed.
- Solve problems on your own and work out what to do if something goes wrong.
- Do more than one thing at a time, switch between tasks and remember where you were with each task.



   Our Stroke Support Helpline is here for you. Contact **0303 3033 100**, helpline@stroke.org.uk or visit stroke.org.uk/cognition for more guidance.

What can I do about my planning and problem-solving?

-  **Practise regularly –** Improvement comes with repetition. Work with your occupational therapist or neuropsychologist to choose activities to focus on. Once you've mastered a task, like making a sandwich, you can move on to more difficult ones.
-  **Keep to a routine –** Doing things in the same order each day helps your brain relearn steps and notice when one is missing. Weekly routines, like set days for laundry or shopping, can prompt you to act.

A daily timetable may be useful, especially if you struggle to get motivated since your stroke.

-  **Use prompts and reminders –** Putting up checklists, written instructions or reminder notes around the house can help to guide you through daily tasks. You could also add brightly coloured stickers to appliances like the microwave or TV remote control to remind you which buttons to press.
-  **Talk it through –** Discussing a task with someone beforehand can help you think through the steps and consider what might go wrong, so that you know what to do.

Stormont supports 24/7 thrombectomy

In February, stroke survivors and campaigners in Northern Ireland welcomed unanimous cross-party support from MLAs for the introduction of a 24/7 thrombectomy service.

The vote marked an important milestone in our ongoing Saving Brains campaign in Northern Ireland, calling on the Health Minister to set a clear, time-bound plan for delivering full round-the-clock access to this life-changing treatment.

A thrombectomy is a mechanical procedure that removes a blood clot from the brain. It's vital that people who are eligible for the procedure get it as quickly as possible after a stroke. Yet in Northern Ireland it's only available from 8am to 5pm, meaning around 140 patients each year miss out on treatment that could prevent long-term disability.

For stroke survivors, the campaign is deeply personal. Their experiences show exactly why timely access to thrombectomy cannot wait.

Paul, from County Armagh, had a stroke in 2016, aged 40. 'I was lucky enough to have a thrombectomy here in Northern Ireland,' says Paul.

In Northern Ireland, around 140 patients each year miss out on treatment that could prevent long-term disability.

'Unfortunately, not everyone has that chance. I'm determined to live each day to the full and have channelled my late Dad's 'just get on with it' attitude.



Opposition MLAs join Stroke Association campaigners in calling for 24/7 access to thrombectomy.



'It can't wait': Paul raises awareness of the campaign in the media.

'Since then, I've become a father, walked the Camino De Santiago hiking route in Spain and a huge amount more. I was lucky to have that chance because the team at the Royal Victoria Hospital were there and available to deliver my thrombectomy. Thrombectomy 24/7 is about saving brains, it means that more people will have a chance of a better survival – it's not something that can wait.'

The Northern Ireland Executive had previously committed to

delivering a 24/7 thrombectomy service by the end of 2024 in the 2022 Stroke Action Plan, but that deadline passed without delivery.

'We are very pleased that MLAs offered their full support for expanding thrombectomy services, but political agreement must now translate into action,' says Lauren Shaw, the Stroke Association's Policy and Influencing Lead for Northern Ireland. 'Stroke patients still



Go to stroke.org.uk/SavingBrainsNI to support the Saving Brains campaign and help to drive change for stroke survivors.

Visit stroke.org.uk/SNcampaigners to find out more about our campaigns around the UK.

don't have the service they were promised in 2022. Every eligible person deserves access to thrombectomy regardless of when or where they have a stroke.'

Stroke survivors have been central to building support and momentum for the Saving Brains campaign. Many have spoken about the uncertainty

and fear that come with knowing their recovery depended on the exact time they arrived at hospital, while others reflect on the months of rehabilitation that might have been avoided with timely access. Their experiences underline the real human impact of the current situation and the urgent need for a 24/7 thrombectomy service that meets patients' needs.

Make your voice heard in the May elections around the UK



Scotland

The Scottish election will deliver 129 new MSPs into the Scottish Parliament. Polls suggest that more than half of those MSPs will be new – and they'll want to hear from you.

You can make a real impact, so join our Campaign Network and find out how you can make your voice heard by your local MSP.

Wales

Wales is heading towards a very different Senedd election, with new boundaries and more Members shaping how your voice is represented.

Make sure you're registered to vote so you can have your say. And join our campaigns network – every action you take helps strengthen stroke advocacy across Wales.



Email campaigns@stroke.org.uk to join our Campaign Network to stay up to date on the issues that matter to stroke survivors, and to get involved.

Finding my rhythm

Peter was reading a book in bed when his vision suddenly blurred. Assuming he was just tired, he reached for his glasses – but his arm wouldn't move. When he tried to sit up, he found his leg wasn't working either.

After 37 years working for the ambulance service in North Wales, alarm bells rang immediately. 'I'd seen it enough times in others,' Peter recalls. 'I was having a stroke.'

A bleed on the brain left Peter with no movement on his left side. 'Walking was impossible, my hand wouldn't respond, and I needed help with basic things – dressing, showering, even cutting my food. It was frightening.'

Peter spent two months at the new stroke unit at Caernarfon Hospital, undergoing intensive therapy. With support, he gradually began walking again, but still lives with drop foot, cramps, pins and needles, and a heavy numbness down his left side.

'My face still feels like I've had dental anaesthetic, and my hand feels like I've been holding a sander for hours,' he explains. 'My left shoe wears out quickly from dragging, and my balance is unreliable.'

Despite this, Peter was determined to continue his recovery and try something new. Before his stroke, music had been a big part of his life and he often sang at local Country and Western nights. He had always wanted to learn the guitar and, thinking the finger work might help his hand, decided to start practising.

At first, progress was slow. 'I didn't even know how to tune it,' he laughs. 'My wife, Ann, would close the doors



and turn up the TV to drown out the noise. But one day, she recognised a tune. She's been listening to the same tune ever since!

Encouraged by loved ones and his Stroke Support Coordinator, playing the guitar soon became both therapeutic and an escape for Peter. 'When I was with the guitar, I wasn't thinking about my stroke. I was somewhere else. When my thumb was on the neck, my hand was steady. I could move my fingers. The numbness helped, because

'When I was with the guitar, I wasn't thinking about my stroke.'

learning guitar is supposed to hurt but I couldn't feel it.'

The first song Peter learned was Alan Jackson's The Older I Get. 'Reading the lyrics – 'You only get a minute, you better live it while you're in it, because it's gone in a blink' – changed my outlook,' says Peter. 'It made me appreciate what really matters.'



In 2024, 18 months after his stroke, Peter took to the stage with his guitar. Joined by family friends, Meryl and Tobi, who supported him throughout his recovery, the trio helped raise £2,000 for the Caernarfon Stroke Unit.

'My aim was to play guitar on stage, and I did,' says Peter. 'I wasn't Eric Clapton, but I proved to myself I could.'

'I'm not the same person I was before my stroke. But in some ways, I'm stronger.'

Stroke is devastating, and everybody's journey is different, but there are positives. I can now do something I couldn't before by playing guitar. Not everything is achievable, but it's about achieving what you can.'

Doing something you love can help you feel good and support your recovery. If you want to restart a hobby or try something new, visit stroke.org.uk/hobbies for ideas and organisations that can help.

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Goal-setting to support your stroke recovery

'I used to be very active. I did running, swimming and dog-walking – about 25,000 steps a day. After my stroke, I couldn't even feel my legs, let alone move them.'

Life after a stroke can look very different. It might be difficult to do things you used to. That was certainly the case for Joanne, who had a stroke in 2024, aged 51.

After thrombectomy treatment, Jo set small goals in hospital, like standing up and getting to the toilet independently.

Like Jo, you can achieve new things or find other ways of doing things. This is all part of your recovery.

You might also hear goals being called milestones, aims, achievements or objectives. Some stroke survivors say they prefer 'milestone' instead of 'goal' because it feels like a step to work towards before moving on to the next. Whereas 'goal' can feel like an end point.

Tips for setting achievable milestones

Keep your milestones clear, focused and practical

Start by asking yourself: Which area of recovery am I focusing on?

Examples:

- Physical abilities: fatigue, balance, vision problems.
- Cognitive function: memory and thinking, concentration.
- Emotional and behavioural changes: mood, loneliness.
- Communication and aphasia.
- Daily living: driving, exercising, holidays.

Then, try to make sure your milestones are:



Specific – Make milestones clear and focused. Example: 'I'll walk with my partner.'



Measurable – You need to be able to measure your progress. Example: 'I'll walk with my partner **twice a week**.'



Achievable – Make milestones challenging but achievable. Example: 'I'll walk with my partner twice a week **for half an hour**.'



Relevant – Connect milestones to a larger purpose. Example: 'I'll walk with my partner twice a week for half an hour to **improve my mobility**.'



Timely – Set a target start and finish date. Example: 'I'll walk with my partner twice a week for half an hour **for the next six weeks** to improve my mobility.'



Try writing down your milestone and displaying it somewhere you look every day.



Jo says: 'Don't try to do everything at once. You are given so much advice that it can be overwhelming, so just pace yourself.'

'Although it feels like some things won't be achievable again, breaking them down into smaller steps really helps.'

Make your milestone visible

We remember tasks more easily when we see them often. Jo says: 'In hospital, I had a wall chart with my personal goals. At the time, I honestly didn't think I'd be able to do them, but as I went along, I did. Seeing the goals there every day helped me focus.'

Try writing down your milestone and displaying it somewhere you look every day, like your wardrobe door or fridge. You could even try setting a reminder on your phone to work towards your goals.

Plan milestones that involve others

Having goals you work on alone is great. But setting goals you can do with therapists, friends or family members can make the process more enjoyable and motivating. Having someone support you or join in can help you stick to your plans.

'My daughters came in every single day,' says Jo. 'They saw me take my first steps unaided and were so proud. That was a massive moment. It felt like there was hope.'

Make time for rest

Jo says: 'Don't feel guilty for resting, even if you haven't been physically active, cognitive fatigue is a real thing!'

'I was getting fatigued really easily. So stroke counsellor Manu suggested that I block out time for rest in my daily planner. This helped me so much because I like lists and ticking things off, so it felt like I had achieved something.'

Taking time out from working on your goals is incredibly important. It allows your body and mind time to rest, reset and make steady progress.

Focus on the positives

Reflecting on a milestone matters as much as achieving it. It helps you think about what you could've done differently and recognise how far you've come.

Jo says: 'As my daughter tells me, now I can stand up, I can walk, I can write and I can speak. Remind yourself of the things you have got and the things you can do. Try not to dwell on the negatives and stay focused on the positives.'

'Don't feel guilty for resting, even if you haven't been physically active.'



Visit stroke.org.uk/goals for more information.

Relearning the garden

Different parts of your brain work together to produce cognitive skills like thinking and memory. If one of those parts is damaged by a stroke, it can lead to cognitive problems, as Paul experienced.



Paul's life changed abruptly after his stroke in 2021. 'While I've made progress with my mobility, cognitive fatigue, memory and concentration difficulties still have a significant impact on day-to-day life,' says Paul.

As a passionate gardener, Paul felt frustrated that he could no longer recall plant names, especially their Latin names. Wanting to explore ways to improve his memory and keen to reclaim an important part of his life, Paul started a project called 'Relearning the garden'.

'My project is about starting again gently, relearning plant names using techniques I find simple but effective – linking names to sensory cues like scent or shape, creating small stories and using repetition, rather than pressure or testing.

'For example, I've been exploring ways to relearn the Latin name for Lavender, 'Lavandula angustifolia'. First, I used my senses to help me. I looked carefully at the lavender – noticing its twisting stems and

'I've learned that fatigue makes learning slippery. So, after each short session, I take a break'.

silvery leaves – while repeating the Latin name. I used its scent to jog my memory too.

'I then broke the Latin name into parts and created a mental image to help me connect the words to the plant. I imagine a narrow path ('angustifolia', means 'narrow-leaved'), lined with lavender, being washed by a gentle breeze. ('Lavandula' comes from 'lavare', which means 'to wash'.) Tying sound, meaning, and emotion together makes it easier to recall.

'I've learned that fatigue makes learning slippery. So, after each short session, I take a break. When I return to the lavender, I repeat the process: see, smell, say. Bit by bit, the plant, the scent, and the words are weaving themselves back together in my memory.

'My aim is to make learning calm and enjoyable again for myself, and to share what I'm discovering in case it helps others living with memory or cognitive changes to rebuild their confidence.'

'It's also helped me accept that my brain works differently now, and that learning can still happen – just in new ways.'

'Recovery isn't just about physical healing but learning how to live well with change. I've had to learn to pace myself and accept that I have good days and not-so-good days. It's important to be patient and kind to yourself, especially when it comes to fatigue or memory changes. Progress isn't always obvious, and pushing too hard can sometimes set you back. But small, gentle steps taken at your own pace really do add up over time.'

'Finding support, through family, peers, or organisations like the Stroke Association, can make a huge difference. Sharing your experiences can help you realise you're not alone.'



Paul uses his senses and mental imagery to recall plant names.

Paul now uses his experiences to help others by volunteering with our Weekly Volunteer Calls, offering telephone support to stroke survivors and carers. He also joined our Stroke Views Involvement Network, giving him the opportunity to use his voice and experience to shape our work.

'Volunteering has helped me rebuild confidence and a sense

of purpose. I've been able to contribute in ways that feel meaningful while still being mindful of my own energy and recovery.

'I value the human connection – whether it's through a one-to-

one call or contributing to wider projects. It's empowering to know that my lived experience can shape support for others and that I'm helping to ensure that the voices of stroke survivors are heard.'



Visit stroke.org.uk/cognition or call 0303 3033 100 for guidance on cognitive problems after stroke. You can also find out more about volunteering or joining our Stroke Views Involvement Network at stroke.org.uk/get-involved

Use **your experiences** to shape stroke research

No one knows what it is like to experience and live with stroke better than stroke survivors and those who support them. That's why we think it's vital that people affected by stroke are involved in shaping stroke research, to make sure it's relevant and important to those it aims to benefit.

One of the ways we support people to do this is through Stroke Voices in Research (SViR). This is a group of over 100 stroke survivors, carers and family members who use their experiences to inform and improve our research. They help to decide what we fund, support researchers to develop their projects and make involvement work better for everyone.

Phyllis joined SViR three years ago, wanting to use both her medical background and the challenges she faced after

her stroke to improve stroke treatment and care.

'I'm a retired consultant oncologist. I've worked in hospitals for 38 years and know how they should work. After my stroke, I lost the vision on my left side, I have a clumsy left hand and foot, speech problems and my personality's changed. But I received no support. I had to beg for speech therapy and physio. I was appalled – imagine what it's like if you don't know the system.

'That's why I joined SViR. I've had a stroke and I've done research myself, so understand it from both sides. I wanted to share my knowledge to make things better for others.

'I've been involved in research grant application panels, steering committees, and advisory groups for projects including thrombectomy and post-stroke emotionalism, which I suffer from.

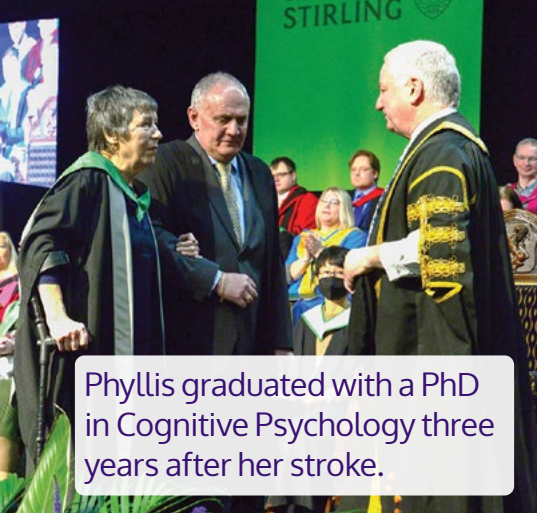


'We look at research from the patient's point of view. We help researchers understand the real impact of stroke and make their work more appropriate for stroke survivors. For example, reviewing information sheets and making them more accessible. We also suggest where funding should go and support projects that really will make a difference to people's lives.'

'We look at research from the patient's point of view. We help researchers understand the real impact of stroke.'

Recently, Phyllis and other SViR members helped develop our new research strategy for 2026–2031 – our plan to ensure the research we fund has the greatest impact.

'I was on the patient advisory group for the strategy,' says Phyllis. 'We talked about what research means to us and what should be prioritised.'



Phyllis graduated with a PhD in Cognitive Psychology three years after her stroke.

is about getting more attention, money, participation and quicker results.

'Currently, if research gets a good result, it takes years to reach hospitals. We want to speed up that transition. The strategy also aims to make getting involved in research accessible for anyone to join.

'I'd say to anybody thinking of getting involved in research, just do it. The support you get is tremendous. Everybody is relevant and has something important to say. Nobody judges you – we're all in the same boat.

'I feel I'm doing something useful. This isn't how I planned my retirement, but I don't let the stroke stop me. Since my stroke, I've travelled and finished my PhD. You've got to live your life how you want and look to the future.'

If you'd like to get involved in SViR, go to stroke.org.uk/research-involvement to sign up. You can also read our new research strategy at stroke.org.uk/research-strategy

Based on feedback from SViR, healthcare professionals and the research community, our strategy focuses on four objectives:

- ✓ Getting stroke research the people, skills and money it needs.
- ✓ Ensuring stroke research is prioritised like other major health conditions.
- ✓ Involving more people affected by stroke in research.
- ✓ Speeding up the time it takes for research to become a new treatment.

'Stroke research is underfunded and not seen as a priority by the government. The new strategy

Supporting stroke research

We're committed to funding research to build our understanding of stroke and to improve treatment, care and quality of life for everyone affected.

If you can, please support others whose lives have been changed by stroke. You can make a donation by visiting stroke.org.uk/donating, by calling us on **0300 3300 740** or by completing the form below.

I enclose my total gift of £

Funds raised will go towards vital services and pioneering research to help support people affected by stroke.

I enclose a cheque made payable to the 'Stroke Association' OR please debit my: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ CAF Charity Card

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Please detach this form and return it to us using the envelope enclosed, or post it to:
Stroke Association, Bumpers Way, Bumpers Farm, Chippenham SN14 6NG



Keeping in touch

We would love to send you information about the difference you can make to families affected by stroke through campaigning, volunteering, donating and through your own fundraising. Please tell us how you'd like us to stay in touch by filling in your details below.

How would you like to hear from us?

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Your name:

Please enter your phone number or email:

Address

Postcode

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Your privacy is our priority. We promise to keep your details safe and will never sell them. We will also keep in touch by post about how we can continue to support you, and opportunities to support us. If you would like to change the way you hear from us, just call **0300 3300 740** or email supporter.relations@stroke.org.uk. How we protect and use your personal data is set out in our privacy policy at stroke.org.uk/privacy

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Stroke
Association



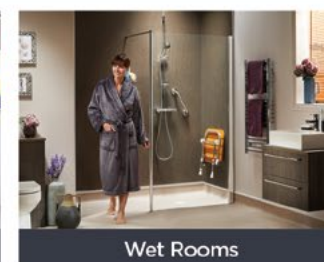
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STRK21/03/26

'There's strength in sharing'

At 24, Dajan was living his dream – running his own clothing brand, and working alongside his dad, who owns a record label and talent management company.

'Life was good. I was always on the go,' says Dajan. 'I didn't think anything could stop me.'

Then, in 2023, during a business meeting his phone slipped from his left hand.

When he tried to pick it up, his arm wouldn't move. 'It was like my arm didn't belong to

me. I didn't want to alarm anyone, so I sat there, trying to figure out what was happening.'

Minutes later, his dad asked him a question. 'I tried to speak and all that came out was a grunt. Inside, panic began to build.'

Realising something was wrong, Dajan's dad told a colleague to call an ambulance. When the paramedics checked him, they recognised the signs of a stroke.

'When they said that word, I thought, surely not me? You never think something like that could happen to you, especially in your twenties.'

At hospital, scans confirmed that he'd had a stroke caused by a blood clot. His dad's quick thinking and the speed of the paramedics meant he was treated almost immediately – which may have saved his life.

Thankfully, Dajan quickly regained his speech. Further tests revealed that the stroke was caused by a small hole in his

heart. In 2024, he had surgery to close it and has been physically and mentally well since.

'It could have been so much worse,' reflects Dajan. 'I feel like I was given a second chance, and I want to make it count.'

Dajan now volunteers with our Weekly Volunteer Calls telephone service, supporting other stroke survivors and helping them to feel less alone.

'I know how scary it feels, so if I can make someone feel even a little bit better, it's worth it.'

'We're all fighting battles people don't see. But talking about it gives you power. When you open up, it gives others the courage to do the same.'

'If my story helps just one person recognise the signs of a stroke or feel less alone, then something good has come out of all this. There's strength in sharing, and I want people to see that there's life after stroke. I'm proof of that.'



You don't need to face stroke alone. A weekly phone conversation with one of our trained volunteers can support your recovery journey. Visit stroke.org.uk/volunteer-calls or call 0303 3033 100 to sign up.

'I had no idea about atrial fibrillation until after my stroke'

In July 2025, Alwyn was at work when he suddenly felt 'odd'. 'I felt a hot flush and a numbness in my right arm,' he remembers. 'I carried on working and realised that I was typing gibberish and struggling to read.'

Concerned, Alwyn went to hospital, where tests confirmed he'd had a stroke.

'It was a shock but, luckily, the impact was minimal. My arm was numb, but I didn't have any issues because of it. I was off work for two months because I had serious headaches, but over time they settled down.'

To understand what had caused the stroke, Alwyn was given an ECG monitor to wear for a week. This detected a heart condition called atrial fibrillation (AF), which causes an irregular heartbeat and raises your risk of a serious stroke.

For years, Alwyn had experienced chest flutters, but previous ECGs didn't detect anything. Learning that AF had caused his stroke brought an unexpected sense of relief. 'I could plan and help make sure it didn't happen again,' he says.

Determined to reduce his risk of another stroke and help manage the AF, Alwyn made major lifestyle changes – losing weight and exercising regularly.

However, in December 2025, he experienced another AF event. Walking home from the gym one evening, his heart suddenly began to race.

'When I got home, I lay down. But it carried on so I tried the ECG and blood pressure monitor I have. It showed that I had a high heart rate and reported 'Possible AF'.'

Alwyn repeated the readings several times – each time the device flagged a high heart rate and possible AF, so his wife called an ambulance.

For years, Alwyn had experienced chest flutters, but previous ECGs didn't detect anything.



'Being able to check my blood pressure and heart rate helped me identify what was wrong and get help quickly. Before my stroke, it was always too late for the doctors to detect anything. If people don't know they're experiencing AF, devices like this could help them to get checked sooner, reducing stroke risk.'

Alwyn is now passionate about raising awareness of the link between stroke and AF, and the lifestyle changes that can help.

'Over the years, doctors told me that I should change my lifestyle, because my blood pressure had climbed as I became more sedentary and put on weight. But being a bloke, I thought I was indestructible.'

'The stroke was a wake-up call. I've now lost 16 kg. Walking daily and changing my diet made the biggest difference.'

'The sedentary lifestyle is a factor in high blood pressure, AF and stroke. You have to build movement into your life. Get up every hour from your desk and do something. Standing squats, walk up and down the stairs, go for a walk at lunch.'

'My message to others would also be to take your medication. I'll be on blood pressure pills, statins and blood thinners for life. But I'm happy because it reduces the chances of having another stroke.'

'So many people have no clue what AF is. I tell everybody about my stroke – I want to get the message about stroke and AF out there and make people understand.'



0HEAPP-1077

We've partnered with OMRON Healthcare to raise awareness about stroke and the importance of early AF detection. Visit stroke.org.uk/Omron and stroke.org.uk/AF to learn more.

Gtech

AirRAM3 Plus

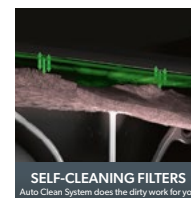
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Nick

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Helping someone to manage their finances

After a stroke, people may need help with managing their money and benefits. If the person you care for can make their own decisions (often referred to as having 'mental capacity'), but needs extra support, these options can help:

Ask about accessible banking services

- If your family member or friend has difficulties using bank services because of sight loss or communication difficulties, ask the bank what support they offer people with disabilities.
- This could include talking cash machines, large print bank statements, communication support in the branch or accessible debit cards.
- Banks can also provide personalised stamps for customers who struggle to write their signature.
- Contact their bank to find out what's available.

Get a third party mandate

- The stroke survivor can give you written permission or a 'third party mandate' to operate their bank or building society account.
- This allows you to do things like make payments and discuss transactions for them.
- This is a good short-term option if the person you support needs help managing day-to-day banking. For longer-term support, consider a power of attorney. (See stroke.org.uk/PoA)
- Contact their bank to get this set up.



Learn more about financial help for carers at stroke.org.uk/carers-finance or call our Stroke Support Helpline on 0303 3033 100.

Ask the benefit provider for reasonable adjustments

- If the person you care for has a disability that makes it hard to access services from a benefit provider, such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Department for Communities (Northern Ireland) or Social Security Scotland, you can ask them to make reasonable adjustments.
- Get the stroke survivor's permission first, then contact the relevant benefit service to find out what help is available.
- For example, the DWP might be able to visit them at home to help with their claim if they can't fill in the form.

Become an appointee

- If the stroke survivor needs greater support to manage their benefits or state pension, you can apply to become an appointee.
- This makes you responsible for managing their benefit claims. For example, reporting changes of circumstance that might affect their payments.
- To become an appointee, contact the office handling their benefits. The provider will visit you both to assess if they need an appointee and if you're suitable.
- Go to gov.uk/become-appointee-for-someone-claiming-benefits to learn more about the application process.

Puzzles



Puzzles can be a fun way to exercise your mind and improve concentration, understanding and memory.

Word search

L G R K U J E B R
E S U Y D I O E L
I R T P L X T A U
N B C L E R C G I
A J O R I L C L K
P C R E I R R E T
S R V P O O D L E
M E G O D L L U B
R M A L T E S E H

BEAGLE	POODLE
BOXER	PUG
BULLDOG	RETRIEVER
COLLIE	TERRIER
MALTESE	SPANIEL

Across

- 1 Brilliant (6)
- 5 Toast of New Zealand (3,3)
- 8 Have (3)
- 9 Beset (6)
- 10 Dull-witted (6)
- 11 Fiercely (5,3,4)
- 13 Temper (5,2,4)
- 15 Competitive guile (12)
- 18 Bloom (6)
- 20 Wryly funny (6)
- 21 Scarper (3)
- 22 Change or exchange (6)
- 23 Twirl (6)

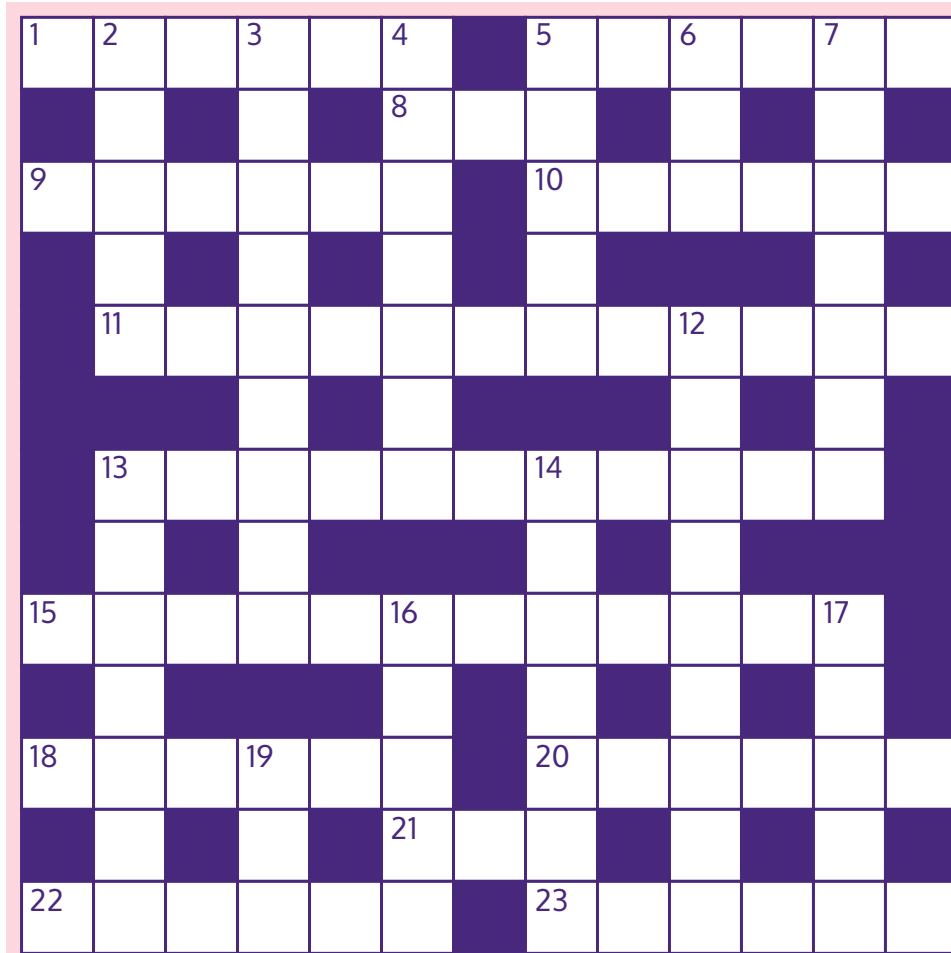
Lottery

For your chance to win £1,000 every week, play the Stroke Association Charity Lottery. Find out more at lottery.stroke.org.uk

Solutions
see page 50

Down

- 2 Distress (5)
- 3 Dry up (9)
- 4 Obstinate (7)
- 5 Familiar (5)
- 6 Fitting (3)
- 7 Cancel (7)
- 12 Adjoin (9)
- 13 Fall for; bird (7)
- 14 Financial provision (7)
- 16 Sweet cicely (5)
- 17 Use (5)
- 19 Nous (3)



With thanks to The Times/News Syndication who granted us rights to this crossword.

Finding strength through support

When a stroke happens, we're here with support for stroke survivors and their families. But we can only continue to provide vital support with your help. A huge thank you to everyone who has gone the extra mile to fundraise, volunteer and campaign with us. Your efforts mean we can reach even more people who need us.



Emily and James

After sadly losing their Dad, Chris, to a stroke last year, siblings Emily and James, and some very supportive friends, decided to take on the Manchester half marathon for us in his memory. Together they've raised over £7,500. Thank you!

Declan

Congratulations to Declan, who conquered both the Berlin and Chicago marathons in memory of his Nana. He's raised over £3,000. 'Nana meant the absolute world to me,' he says. 'This is my way of honouring her and contributing to a cause that now holds a deeply personal place in my heart.'



Find out what events we've got coming up on page 50 or visit stroke.org.uk/donating to donate.

How does your donation help?



£10 supports our Stroke Support Helpline to answer a call from someone who urgently needs support after a life-changing stroke.



£25 could be part of a hardship grant for a stroke survivor who is struggling to pay for basics like food and clothing.



£50 could help us be there for children and families through our Childhood Stroke Support.



Jaz

Thank you to Jaz and her team of 25 family members and friends, who organised a 25km walk in memory of Jaz's husband, Jag, and raised over £6,800. 'Jaz says: 'We wanted to raise as much as possible to honour my wonderful husband's legacy and to help stroke survivors and their families.'



Volunteer spotlight

Alice decided to become a cheer point volunteer after running the 2025 London Marathon to support stroke survivors like her dad.

'During the race, I was so glad to see the cheer point volunteers – I really needed the boost. Their support made me want to give others the same feeling.'

Alice joined our team at the 2025 Royal Parks Half Marathon. 'It was such a fun vibe – it made me feel a part of the community.'

'I wish more people knew how beneficial it is for runners to have the cheer point. It makes such a difference to your race and your whole day!'

Visit stroke.org.uk/yoursupport to find out how you can volunteer.

Join Team Stroke

Get involved and fundraise at home, or join us at exciting events around the UK:



Royal Parks Half Marathon 11 October 2026

Enjoy some of London's best scenery as you run past world-famous landmarks and through beautiful Royal Parks to raise money for stroke survivors. Go to events.stroke.org.uk/royalparks to sign up.



London to Paris Cycle

Cycle between two of Europe's most iconic cities in this fantastic multi-day challenge for Team Stroke. Visit events.stroke.org.uk/LP-Cycle to find out more.

Skydiving

Experience the thrill of a lifetime by taking part in a sponsored tandem skydive. Sign up at events.stroke.org.uk/skydive26 to take an unforgettable leap (from 10,000 feet!) to help support stroke survivors around the UK.

Visit events.stroke.org.uk for more ways to get involved in our work.

Crossword solution

Across: 1 Superb, 5 Kia ora, 8 Own, 9 Assail, 10 Obtuse, 11 Tooth and nail, 13 State of mind, 15 Gamesmanship, 18 Flower, 20 Ironie, 21 Run, 22 Switch, 23 Gyrate

Down: 2 Upset, 3 Evaporate, 4 Bolshie, 5 Known, 6 Apt, 7 Rescind, 12 Neighbour, 13 Swallow, 14 Funding, 16 Myrrh, 17 Point, 19 Wit

L	G	R	K	U	J	E	B	R
E	S	U	Y	D	I	O	E	L
I	R	T	P	L	X	T	A	U
N	B	C	L	E	R	C	G	I
A	J	O	R	I	L	C	L	K
P	C	R	E	I	R	R	E	T
S	R	V	P	O	O	D	L	E
M	E	G	O	D	L	L	U	B
R	M	A	L	T	E	S	E	H

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