

Summer 2025

Stroke News

For everyone affected by stroke

'Watching his little face light up as I read, made me feel like a dad again.'

Leighton shares his recovery journey highlights.

This issue:

- Travelling after stroke
- Our new British Sign Language stroke resources
- Guidance on paying for private treatment

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Contents

Features

- 8 Finding my way back to me** Leighton shares how support from our charity and his family helped his recovery journey.
- 20 Making stroke a priority in Wales** We're calling on the next Welsh Government to make sure stroke survivors get the right care and support.
- 24 Get involved!** Stroke survivor, Rob, talks about the importance of our stroke survivor and carer involvement groups.

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Guidance

- 14** Travelling after a stroke
- 42** Private treatment after stroke

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Editor's letter



It's great to be back working on Stroke News after my maternity leave. Thank you to Agnessa for her wonderful work over the past year.

Stroke can be life-changing for you and your loved ones. But creativity, connection and support can help you find your strength and your way back to life.

Lots of support and a creative approach to comprehension exercises helped Leighton to achieve his goal of being able to read to his son again (page 8).

Taking part in a local photography project brought stroke survivor, Steve, and his partner, Lorrain, closer (page 16).

While for Haydn (page 26) and Eugenie (page 38), using art as part of their recovery helped support their wellbeing, and opened up new opportunities.

I'm looking forward to hearing from readers again and finding out what's important to you, so please get in touch to share your stories and suggestions. Enjoy this issue!

Christine Webster, Editor

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Over to you

In February 2007, I had a subarachnoid haemorrhage, which resulted in me becoming a wheelchair user. I've always been energetic, positive and curious, and although the stroke changed my life, I'm proud of what I've achieved in the 18 years since it happened.

I wanted to help others, so I started volunteering with an independent living charity that supports people in a similar situation to myself.

I've been working with an Occupational Therapist to

explore new activities. So far, I have joined a choir, a book club and an art class, where I enjoy painting in a variety of mediums and styles.

I've also joined the University of the Third Age (U3A), and sing in their choir every Friday. I joined their Members On Their Own group in Kingston. We go to exhibitions or museums together, or just meet up to chat or give little talks, which has helped me to gain more experience of public speaking.

Patty Lloyd

Stroke Support Helpline: **0303 3033 100**

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

Join our Online Community: **onlinecommunity.stroke.org.uk**

Find information about stroke: **stroke.org.uk/publications**

Do you have something to share?



Email **strokenews@stroke.org.uk** or write to us at Stroke News, Stroke Association, 1 Sterling Business Park, Salthouse Road, Brackmills, Northampton, NN4 7EX

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From our Chief Executive

We make sure that stroke survivors and carers have a voice in conversations that affect you.

From informing how governments should act to improve stroke services, to guiding stroke research to make it as effective as possible, to making our resources more accessible, your involvement helps us to make better decisions and understand what is important to you.

With the Senedd Cymru elections coming up in 2026, we've collaborated with people affected by stroke and stroke professionals in Wales to create a new manifesto to help us to influence stroke outcomes in Wales.

In it, we outline three urgent calls for the next Welsh Government to make sure

stroke survivors receive the treatment, care and support they need. You can find out more about our manifesto, and how you can get involved in campaigning to make stroke a priority around the UK, on page 20.

We've also recently worked with members of the Deaf community affected by stroke, to create new stroke-related British Sign Language resources (page 22).

Following the success of this work, we're exploring other communities and ways in which our services can be more accessible. By breaking down barriers to information, we can empower people to make informed decisions about their recovery and help reduce inequity in stroke support.

Juliet Bouverie OBE

Finding my way back to me

Leighton, 39, a railway planner from Aberdare, was always active and on the go before he had his stroke in October 2023.

'I was a workaholic, putting in six days a week on the rails,' he says. 'I coached my son Logan's football team, rarely missed a Cardiff City game, and I'd even run up and down mountains every day for fun. I was always the life and soul of the party – always had a smile on my face.'

Leighton was at a Cardiff City game with a friend when he had a stroke.

'I was going down some steps at the stadium when I collapsed,' he says. 'I tried calling for my friend, but I couldn't speak. A guy nearby

said he'd stay with me until the ambulance arrived.

'I was so lucky I was at the game because the paramedics were right there. They got me to the local hospital so fast, then to Bristol for the thrombectomy (a procedure that removes blood clots and restores blood flow to the brain). I only had 30 minutes left in the window of time for it. Who knows what would've happened if I'd been at home.'

The stroke affected the whole of the right side of Leighton's body. He also had difficulty speaking.

'Physically, everything's changed,' he says. 'I can't kick or throw a ball anymore, can't run and walking too far makes me tired. I can't coach Logan's football team now either – that's been really hard.'

'Who knows what would've happened if I'd been at home.'



Leighton with his partner, Tasha, who has supported him throughout his recovery.



Leighton with his son, Logan.

'I couldn't drive for seven months, so I lost a lot of my independence. I'm not the person I used to be. I was always up for some fun and banter, but now I just can't.

'Emotionally, it's been really tough. At Christmas, I couldn't wait to get back out. But when I went, it was awful. I couldn't speak. It was too loud and too much.

I texted my partner, Tasha, to come and get me. When she picked me up, I bawled my eyes out. I was on a downward spiral after that.

Leighton's low point was when his son, Logan, saw him break down for the first time. 'I went for a walk, and I just kept crying. Logan saw it, and that was hard.

'I went to the doctor for help. I'm now on antidepressants, which have helped me a lot. I started focusing again, and I'm determined to make a full recovery.'

Leighton's partner, Tasha, and son, Logan, now 9, have been incredibly supportive. 'Logan's been amazing,' says Leighton. 'He'll see me struggle and say, 'It's okay, Dad, I'll help you'.'



Stroke Support Coordinator, Deb, visits Leighton.

Leighton also credits much of his progress to Deb, his Stroke Support Coordinator.

'Deb listened to me and understood what I was going through. She kept me grounded. She was always honest with me and would tell me if I needed to work on something, like my speech or reading.

'After my stroke, reading became really difficult. Not just reading words but actually understanding and remembering what I'd just read. Deb introduced me to

visualisation exercises as a way to support my comprehension, and it made a huge difference.

'She encouraged me to picture the story or information in my mind like a film, imagining the scenes, characters, even the sounds or smells. It helped the information to stick better and made it feel more real.

'It turned out to be a really powerful tool in my recovery – and enabled me to read stories to Logan again. That meant everything. I felt like so much of who I was had been taken away.



'But sitting there, book in hand, watching his little face light up as I read, it made me feel like a dad again. It gave me back a piece of normal life and reminded me why I was fighting so hard to recover.'

'I've also been able to return to work, which is something I honestly didn't think would happen. Deb helped me plan a realistic route back. We broke it into stages: improving my reading, building stamina, working on memory and focus. It wasn't about rushing back,

it was about returning when I was ready, with the right tools and understanding in place.

'After a stroke, you can feel completely lost, like you've been thrown into a different life with no map. Deb helped me find my way back bit by bit. She gave me practical tools, emotional support, and helped my family understand what I was going through. It helped us feel seen, heard, and supported. And that made all the difference, not just to me, but to everyone around me.'

Whether you need information, or to chat when times are tough, contact us on **0303 3033 100** or helpline@stroke.org.uk. We're here to support you every step of the way.

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Travelling after stroke

Many people can and do enjoy going on holiday after a stroke. They're a good opportunity to relax, and can serve as an important part of your post-stroke recovery.

Hema, from our Stroke Support Helpline, answers some commonly asked questions to help you plan your break.

Q Is it safe to travel after a stroke?

Many people think they need to wait a month or longer to travel, but this isn't always the case. It very much depends on when you had your stroke, your medical situation and where and how you're intending to travel.

Before travelling by air, you should always speak to your GP or stroke consultant to make sure that this is a safe option for you. They may also advise on circulation and anti-coagulants.

Each airline has its own rules on flying with medical conditions, so it's important to check with your airline too, well in advance of travelling.

A cruise or a road trip can be good alternatives to flying, but it's still worth talking to your doctor before you go. Make sure you've got plenty of medication for your trip and build in frequent breaks to help with comfort and fatigue.

Q What health precautions can I take?

- **Stay hydrated** – drink plenty of fluids to help with circulation and hydration, especially on long journeys or in hot climates.
- **Plan in rest stops** – be mindful of when you're feeling tired, especially when sightseeing, and take regular breaks to prevent fatigue and overexertion.
- **Ask for support** – talk to the airport/port/station, your travel company or hotel before your trip to make sure assistance is available when you need it.

- **Wear sun cream** – this is especially important if you have no feeling or a loss of sensation on one side, to prevent burning.

Q Should I avoid certain climates?

Generally speaking, you can travel to most places in the world. However, depending on your health post-stroke, it can be advisable to avoid extreme heat and cold, or high altitudes. Speak to your doctor if you have concerns.

Visit stroke.org.uk/holidays or contact our Stroke Support Helpline on 0303 3033 100 or helpline@stroke.org.uk for more information. You can also find tips from fellow stroke survivors at onlinecommunity.stroke.org.uk/weather-abroad

Top tips:

- ✓ **Get travel insurance** – no matter where you're travelling, so if something does go wrong, you can get some or all your money back.
- ✓ **Sign up for a Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)** – so you can access essential healthcare, either for free or at the same cost a local person would pay. You can apply for free on nhs.uk/GHIC or call 0300 330 1350.
- ✓ **Bring a doctor's letter and a copy of your prescription** – to help you avoid problems with medication at airport security and customs.



Connecting through creativity

In August 2023, Steve Jackson was sitting with his partner, Lorrain, enjoying the warm weather when his face started to tingle. 'It only lasted a few minutes,' says Steve. 'A few weeks later, I started to feel really sick and exhausted, but I thought it was just the flu.'

Over the next two months, Steve began to struggle with his memory, vision and coordination. 'Everyday tasks became so difficult for him,' says Lorrain. 'He couldn't see where he was going and kept bumping into things. His memory also got really bad. I took him to the GP but, because it was such a hot summer, they thought it might be heat stroke or dehydration.'

Still concerned, Lorrain took Steve to hospital. Scans revealed he'd had two strokes. Because of the impact on his vision and memory, Steve couldn't safely live on his own anymore, so he moved in with Lorrain, who became his carer.

'The first day we were on our own, I burst into tears. I was so scared,' says Lorrain. 'I wanted to help him, but I didn't know how. It's tough, but we've learned how to manage things between us.'

They began attending a local support group run by the Barnsley Community Integrated Stroke Team. Donna, a Stroke Support Coordinator who supports the group, encouraged them to participate in a photography project called 'Capturing the Season'. The project was developed by Creative Minds together with the Stroke Association and the Barnsley Community Integrated



Stroke Team and focused on the changing seasons at Locke Park in Barnsley.

The project aimed to give stroke survivors and their partners the chance to learn a new skill, build confidence and feel more comfortable socialising again. Eight couples – including Steve and Lorrain – received hands-on guidance and were given professional cameras to use during the sessions.

'It's tough, but we've learned how to manage things between us.'

'Steve's always been passionate about photography,' says Lorrain. 'But after his stroke, he didn't have the eyesight to take photos anymore. At first, I had no clue what I was doing, and Steve couldn't take the photos because he couldn't see. So he'd point me in the right direction and tell me what to do with the camera. We took some really nice photos.'



Steve and Lorrain receive a print of their favourite photo from the Mayor and Mayoress of Barnsley, at their photography exhibition.

'Doing the photo project brought me and Steve closer. We realised we can still do things together, and I was surprised by how much I enjoyed it. It sparked something in Steve – he discovered his love of photography all over again.'

Steve and Lorrain's photos, alongside others involved in the project, were exhibited at The Cooper Gallery, Barnsley, on 29 May. Featured on the BBC, the exhibition, open until 22 August 2025, aims to raise awareness about stroke recovery. The photos will then be moved

to the stroke recovery ward at Kendray Hospital.

'It feels good to know that our photographs might give stroke survivors and their families hope – to show them they can still do things after stroke,' says Steve. 'Recovery isn't easy, but it's not impossible. You can still find your way back to life.'



Find out more about your local stroke support group:
stroke.org.uk/groups

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Making stroke a priority in Wales

Stroke affects over 7,000 people each year in Wales. Yet Wales ranks just 21st out of the world's 26 highest income countries for stroke outcomes.

When former fire fighter, Matt, had a stroke in January 2021, he was discharged from hospital with very little support.

'Having a stroke was traumatic, and all I was given was a leaflet. I was petrified and confused. It felt like they were saying, 'You're ok to physically walk out of here. Here is some information, now get on with it.'

The stroke left Matt with fatigue and affected his speech and cognition. This had a huge impact on his ability to work, family life and mental health.

'I may have passed the hospital's mobility tests, but I wasn't me. I couldn't speak properly, and I was too fatigued to do anything.



My personality also changed. I got angry and took it out on my family.

'Getting emotional support is hard. I went to the GP for help, but they wanted to put me on antidepressants, which I didn't want. As a firefighter I have seen some awful things and counselling has always helped, so I wanted that after my stroke. They gave me lots of charities to get in touch with, but it overwhelmed me and made it worse.'

Sadly, Matt isn't alone in his experiences. We want to make sure that Wales does not fall behind the rest of Europe when it comes to stroke care. The upcoming 2026 Senedd

Cymru election presents a good opportunity to influence policies affecting the quality of care for stroke survivors in Wales.

Working with people affected by stroke and stroke professionals, we've created a new manifesto, outlining three urgent calls to action for the next Welsh Government to make sure people who have a stroke in Wales get the best care.

As the election approaches, we're urging all political parties to act now. Together, we can ensure that every stroke survivor receives the support they need.

1 Commit to the national transformation of stroke services

Stroke services have declined since 2019. We're urging the Welsh Government to commit to improving access to treatments like thrombectomy, and life after stroke services.

2 Implement a national Act FAST / Cam NESA campaign

We're calling for a regular, national, English and Welsh-language stroke awareness campaign to increase public knowledge of stroke symptoms and risk factors.

3 Provide specialist mental health support for stroke survivors

Like Matt, 75% of stroke survivors experience mental health challenges, yet only 3% receive timely support. We're calling for increased funding and specialist services, building on partnerships, like our work with Mind Cymru.



Visit stroke.org.uk/Wales to read our Wales manifesto and to sign up to our UK-wide Campaigns Network.

Improving stroke information for the Deaf community



After the shock and confusion of a stroke, you need to be able to access reliable, clear and easy to understand stroke information so you can get the support you need, when you need it.

Jenny manages the team responsible for developing our health information. From creating aphasia-friendly support tools, to producing audio guides, they work with people affected by stroke to make sure our publications are as accessible as possible. Here, we speak to Jenny about producing new resources for the Deaf community:

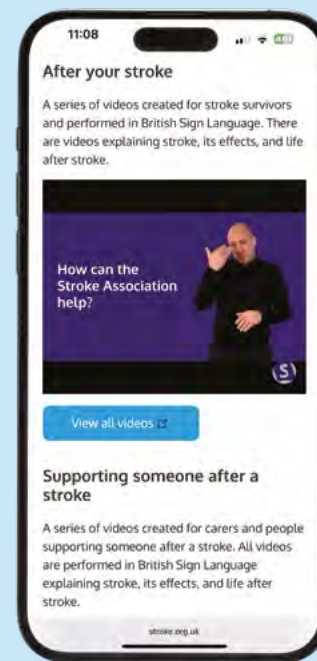
How did you start working with the Deaf community?

In 2024, the Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Bristol asked us to run a session on stroke for their community. A lack of stroke-related

information available in British Sign Language (BSL) meant many faced difficulties in accessing essential health services and understanding medical information. So, during our visit, we also ran a listening session to find out how we could better support them.

What did you learn from the listening session?

A group, including stroke survivors, gave valuable feedback on our existing information. They suggested ways to make it more accessible. For example, using short, signed videos on key topics.



They also shared their stories with us and told us about the challenges that many BSL users face while trying to access healthcare. People described long waits for interpreters at GP appointments and health professionals not understanding how to use remote interpreting services effectively.

It was a great visit. By talking to members of the Deaf community, we learnt

a lot about what we needed to do to make our information accessible to BSL users.

What is now available to support Deaf people affected by stroke?

Since then, we've worked with the group to develop 15 BSL videos, organised into two playlists - one for stroke survivors and another for people supporting stroke survivors.

The group also told us that our existing BSL interpreting service for the Stroke Support Helpline was difficult to use. You had to book an interpreter in advance, making it hard to get support quickly.

In response, we've introduced a new video relay service so BSL users can connect with an interpreter instantly when they contact our Stroke Support Helpline or our Supporter Relations Team. The new videos and this service are available at stroke.org.uk/sign-language.



To find out more or to request information in an accessible format, visit stroke.org.uk/accessible or call 0303 3033 100.

Get involved in our work

Your voice and your unique experience can help to shape and influence our work, and support your recovery journey.

Rob, 63, has always been passionate about fitness and family. In September 2020 he was preparing for semi-retirement and looking forward to a break. His plans took an unexpected turn when he had a life-changing stroke.

He was unable to use his right side and needed a wheelchair. He also had aphasia – a communication disorder.

‘Before my stroke, I was very active and healthy,’ says Rob. ‘After the stroke, I cried daily. I couldn’t help it. My life had changed so much. I was treated for depression, which has since resolved, but it took years to accept what happened.

‘Life was so different. I had to sleep downstairs and learn to live out of a wheelchair. I did therapy every day, either with a therapist or with my wife, Nova.

‘I made goals for myself. For example, I wanted to walk my daughter down the aisle and make a speech at her wedding. I achieved both, although I pre-recorded the speech in case I was too nervous on the day! This was played on her wedding day and there was not a dry eye to be seen.’

Rob has also been open-minded about opportunities that could help him in his recovery journey. So, in March 2024, he joined one of our involvement groups.

Our involvement groups and network are made up of stroke survivors and carers. They work with us to help us understand what is important to you. Our involvement groups have helped to shape some of our charity’s projects, such as developing new Communication Support Packs, and improving our website.



Rob, with his daughter, Rachael, on her wedding day.

The groups also help you to improve your confidence and develop your skills.

‘Getting involved has given me a sense of worth again,’ says Rob. ‘I know the work I’m doing is making a difference. So far, I’ve worked on making the charity’s expense form easier to use, as well as external projects with Network Rail and Nationwide.

‘It’s also very social. We share tips and resources with each other.’

‘Involvement work is always so interesting,’ says our Accessibility Assistant, Janet. ‘I’ll have my thoughts about a project, but the group will add amazing ideas, making such a big difference.’

Staying determined, according to Rob, is crucial for moving forward with life. He has returned to driving and going to the gym. ‘No matter how tough it is, if you put your mind to the situation, you will improve. Don’t give up.’

Visit stroke.org.uk/shape-our-work or call **0303 3033 100** to find out more and to sign up to our Stroke Views Involvement Network.

'Moonlight Moment'

Haydn had always loved to paint, until he had a stroke in July 2014.

'I had my stroke on the left side, which was my dominant side,' says Haydn. 'I didn't think I would ever paint again. Steph, my Stroke Support Coordinator, encouraged me to try painting with my right hand. Even holding a brush was a challenge at first. But every small challenge I've overcome has brought a real sense of progress.'

'Many people see me and say, 'You look fine.' But they don't see the daily struggle that comes with stroke recovery. Art gave me something to look forward to each day, a reason to get out of bed and build on what I had. It's been incredibly positive, both mentally and physically.'

Haydn entered his painting, 'Moonlight Moment', into our stroke survivor Christmas card competition – and is our winner for 2025!

'It was a real surprise, but I feel proud. It's an opportunity to raise money through something I love doing, and give back to the Stroke Association, which has supported so many people like me.'

'This piece came from my love of winter. Even though cold weather affects me more now as it can cause my muscles to seize, I still love the season.'

'The image of the stag with its partner symbolises the importance of having someone by your side. My wife, Lesley, has been that person for me. Her support has been immeasurable.'



Time to get creative

Enter our 2026 stroke survivor Christmas card competition at stroke.org.uk/cardcomp26. Or contact us on 0300 3300 740 or cardcompetition@stroke.org.uk. All of our cards, including Haydn's design, are available from our Christmas shop. See page 47 for details.

Haydn's top tips:

'If you're thinking about trying art as part of your recovery, just give it a go!' says Haydn:

✓ **'Don't be self-critical.'** Your next piece will always be better than your last, that's part of the journey. Celebrate the effort, and if others appreciate your work, that's a bonus, but it's about the joy it brings you.

✓ **'Take breaks.'** Stroke recovery comes with a lot of fatigue, and the beauty of art is that there's no deadline. You can pick it up, put it down and it fits around your energy.

✓ **'Make space for creativity.'** Claim a small part of your home as your creative space, your own little world. As Bob Ross said, 'In my world, I can do anything.' That idea really inspires me.

✓ **'There are no rules in art.'** My wife enjoys colouring and sometimes asks, 'What colour should this be?' and I always say, 'Whatever you like.' The point is to express yourself.'



Online support giving our family hope

Carter was only two years old when he had a devastating stroke in October 2023.



'It came out of the blue,' says Elise, Carter's mum. 'I was giving him a bath when half of his face just dropped.'

Paramedics initially suspected Carter was having a seizure, but a CT scan revealed he'd had a stroke. Doctors placed him in a medically induced coma to help the swelling in his brain go down.

'It was terrifying. We were told to say our goodbyes and to take each hour at a time,' says Elise. 'We just had to wait and see if things would improve.'

'When Carter finally woke up, he was a completely different person. Just days before, he was running around and playing. Then, in an instant, I was watching him lie in a hospital bed – in pain and unable to do any of the things he once could. He couldn't speak, move, or even eat. His eyes looked so blank. He was alive, but we didn't know how much of the boy we knew was still there.'

'Carter is doing remarkably well now, especially considering the severity of his stroke and how much it impacted his brain.'



'We just focus on how far Carter has come.'

He can walk around the house. He needs to use a wheelchair or a splint if he's been outside for more than 15 minutes, but he still gets to play with his brother and just be happy.

'His speech is also improving all the time. He's nowhere near where his peers are, and there are a lot of things he can't do yet, but we just focus on how far he's come.'

When Carter first had his stroke, Elise didn't know any other families affected by

childhood stroke. She wanted to connect with people who understood what she and her family were going through, including all the uncertainties they were facing.

'We had so many questions about Carter's future. Would he ever be able to laugh and feel happiness again? Would he be able to play with friends? Every stroke is different, and every child is different, so doctors can't really give you those answers. But sometimes, you just really need to hear stories that can give you hope.'

Elise began attending our 'Learn and Chat' sessions – an online support group for parents and carers of children who've had a stroke. The monthly sessions give families an opportunity to hear from a healthcare professional who specialises in childhood stroke, ask questions and talk to other parents who've had similar experiences.

'The sessions cover so much,' says Elise. 'The stroke experts always take questions, so it can be a great way to get the information you need without having to pay for a private appointment.'

'We also break out into smaller groups with other parents. This support has been invaluable. I've made friends with people I wouldn't have ever met outside of this group.'

'Having somebody there who's going through the same journey as you and your child can really help you find the strength you need during recovery. They can answer very specific questions, such as how to help your child use the toilet if they can only

use one hand – things other parents wouldn't typically know or understand.

'The Stroke Association has been a lifeline – I don't know how I would have survived without all the support I've had. Speaking with parents who've been through it before has also given our family hope that the future can be bright. Stroke is incredibly frightening, but it doesn't have to be the end. With the right support, things can get better.'



If your child has had a stroke, our online 'Learn and Chat' sessions can help. Visit stroke.org.uk/learn-and-chat or call 0303 3033 100 to sign up or to learn more.

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Improving psychological support for stroke survivors

Stroke survivor, Ann Bamford, has been involved in shaping stroke research for over a decade. She is currently an Honorary Research Assistant on the WAtErS-2 project at the University of Manchester. They are developing a new therapy to support stroke survivors with their mental health. Ann leads on involvement and accessibility, ensuring that people with lived experience of stroke have a say in how the new therapy is developed.

'I know both from personal experience, and from over a decade of conversations with people who have experienced stroke, that there is little psychological support until things are very bad,' says Ann. 'This impedes recovery and makes life hard.'

In 2019, Dr Emma Patchwood and her team, including Ann, got Stroke Association funding for the WAtErS-1 project, exploring whether a psychological therapy called Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) could be adapted to help stroke survivors. ACT focuses on helping you to accept and adjust to your feelings and commit to personal goals.

The results were promising, so, in 2023, we started funding WAtErS-2. This aims to create a more inclusive version of WAtErS-1 that can be delivered by a broad range of stroke professionals.

'I got involved in WAtErS-2, as I was in a team looking at health inequalities and wanted to use that work to develop WAtErS-1.

'We're focusing on two areas of health inequalities – people from different marginalised ethnic communities who are often overlooked in research, and people who experience communication difficulties.

'As the Patient and Public Lead, I'm part of the management team and have been involved in the whole research process. This included helping to make sure we could actively listen to and involve people from marginalised ethnic communities and other groups who are not always heard – something I'm very passionate about.

'Working closely with the team, I recruited and support many of the people in the Patient and Public Involvement Group, to ensure we meet their needs. I love seeing people move from being reticent to put their views forward, to becoming confident contributors.

'After my stroke in 2011, I felt like I had a broken brain that couldn't remember, didn't process and wouldn't do all the things I held dear before. I struggled – and still struggle – to think and speak in a logical way. I was in a very dark place.



'Taking part in WAtErS-2 has benefited me enormously.'

'I became interested in research after participating in a project in the early days of my recovery. That was the first I had heard about patient, carer and public involvement in research – it was a chink of light amid the dark.'

'If anyone had told me back then that I would now be discussing a research project with others with experience of stroke, working out how it would be organised, who we needed to consult and how we would structure things, I would never have believed them!'

'Taking part in WAtErS-2 has benefited me enormously. I love being part of the team at the University of Manchester and I'm treated as someone worth listening to. They give me the support I need, so I can use my skills in encouraging and working with people.'



'To be able to contribute to a project that may help stroke survivors who are experiencing real difficulties is a privilege. I hope that WAtErS-2 will become another tool to help a wide range of people with their psychological, and all-round, wellbeing after stroke.'

'It's so important that research involves the people who have first-hand experience of the condition. By contributing your time and experience, you can help researchers see things from the perspective of the people who'll benefit. It's fun and you meet very interesting people. For me, it's a 'can do' in a sea of things that I can no longer do. It makes me feel that I'm still a useful part of society.'

Learn more about WAtErS-2 at stroke.org.uk/Waters-2. Get involved in stroke research at stroke.org.uk/involved-research

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.

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The power of painting

We often hear how painting can give stroke survivors an artistic outlet to express their emotions, support their wellbeing and aid their recovery. Many discover talents they never knew they had, and it can even provide a source of income. For Eugenie, it led to an exhibition of her work at her local art gallery.

'Time flies when I'm painting. It is not an effort - it's freeness.'



Eugenie, a busy care worker and mother of two teenagers, had her stroke in 2022. She was unable to eat, speak or walk easily. She felt very depressed, isolated and couldn't return to her job.

'When I came back from the hospital, I felt relieved to be with my family. However, it also felt very different, because I was no longer the same person,' says Eugenie.

'The most challenging part of my recovery was the physical changes in my body, and the trauma that caused me. Nothing erases the feeling of sadness when looking at old photos of yourself.'

Eugenie's Stroke Support Coordinator, Lydia, suggested she rekindle a childhood interest in art and has encouraged her as this has blossomed.

'Lydia and the Stroke Association were incredibly supportive. They encouraged me and believed in me even when I doubted myself,' says Eugenie.



'After my stroke, drawing helped me start again. My early drawings were a form of escapism, symbolising my experiences back home in Cameroon. I moved to painting because I felt it allowed more emotion, more depth. It was like going from whispers to a full voice.'

The bright cheerful colours and bold brushstrokes of Eugenie's paintings are striking. Many reflect her experience of stroke. 'I use colour and texture to show struggle and healing, chaos in some areas, peace in others,' she says. 'They're very personal.'

'Time flies when I'm painting. It is not an effort – it's freeness.'

'It gives me a way to express feelings I can't always say aloud, my fears, hopes, sadness and joy all come out on the canvas.'



Eugenie at her art exhibition.

With the help of her Stroke Support Coordinators, Eugenie recently achieved her goal of showing her art to the community, exhibiting her work at the Eagle Gallery in Bedford.

‘Sharing my work was emotional but empowering. I wanted to show everyone what could be accomplished despite pain. I hope it shows others that healing doesn’t have to be silent, you can express yourself and inspire others through creativity.’

Eugenie says she would definitely encourage others to pick up a brush and experience what art can offer.

‘Just start. Don’t worry if it’s ‘good’, do it for you. It’s about feeling, healing, and reconnecting with yourself.

‘Through painting, I’ve met other artists and stroke survivors.

‘Sharing my art has opened doors to conversations and connections I didn’t expect.’



Many stroke support groups include art in their regular activities, and this can be great fun. Visit stroke.org.uk/groups to find stroke support groups in your area.

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LED Headlights

Both vacuums feature LED lights, illuminating the way as you clean and exposing any dust you’ve missed, for a strikingly thorough clean.

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Nick

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Private treatment after a stroke

Stroke recovery is a long, hard process. While stroke diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation are available on the NHS in the UK, stroke survivors sometimes opt for private treatment to help them towards their recovery goals.

Private treatment is any health treatment you pay for yourself, either directly or through medical insurance. 'Going private' gives you more choice in your treatment and care. However, costs vary depending on where you live and the treatment you need, so it's important to look at the service, provider and costs carefully before committing.

How do I pay for private treatment?

Paying for yourself – You can pay directly for the treatment if you don't have, or don't want to use, medical insurance. The private provider should outline

all the costs before you agree to treatment.

Some healthcare providers offer finance options to help you pay. Get independent advice if you're thinking about taking out a loan or credit agreement.

Medical insurance – Some employers offer medical insurance as a benefit, or you can buy your own. With some insurance policies, you pay for the treatment and then claim the money back. Other policies pay the hospital or therapist directly.

Check what conditions and treatments are included in your insurance. Be aware that pre-existing health conditions may not be covered if you take out a new policy.

Before you start treatment, check with the insurance company whether it's covered in full or in part. Get a written agreement that

they will pay, and check if they need a referral from your GP.

Grants – Some organisations provide grants for some types of treatment. For example, the Hospital Saturday Fund covers some therapies (hospitalsaturdayfund.org, tel: 0207 2021 365). The Frederick Andrew Trust offers grants to support women after a recent illness or injury (frederickandrewtrust.org, tel: 0753 4184 684).



Visit stroke.org.uk/private-treatment for more information. Or contact our Stroke Support Helpline at helpline@stroke.org.uk or 0303 3033 100.

Top tips:

✓ **Talk to your GP** – You can sometimes go directly to the private healthcare provider to ask for treatment. But it's a good idea to talk to your GP first to discuss your options. If you want private treatment, they can write a referral letter. There is no charge for this.

✓ **Check your provider** – Only use private professionals or organisations who can provide evidence of qualifications and accreditation. You can search for healthcare providers through reputable bodies such as the **Private Healthcare Information Network (PHIN)**. They provide unbiased information on UK private hospitals and consultants. Visit phin.org.uk or call 0203 479 3810.

Puzzles



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

Word search

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

ARTIST
PAINT
BRUSH
EASEL
CANVAS

COLOUR
TONE
HUE
MIX
BLEND

Across

- 1 Moderate (6)
- 5 Subtlety (6)
- 8 Connect (4)
- 9 Basic principle (8)
- 10 Minor offence (12)
- 12 Weird (6)
- 14 Gilet (6)
- 15 Extremely happy (7,2,3)
- 18 Ardent wish (8)
- 20 Dark blue (4)
- 21 Act in accordance (6)
- 22 Bondage (6)

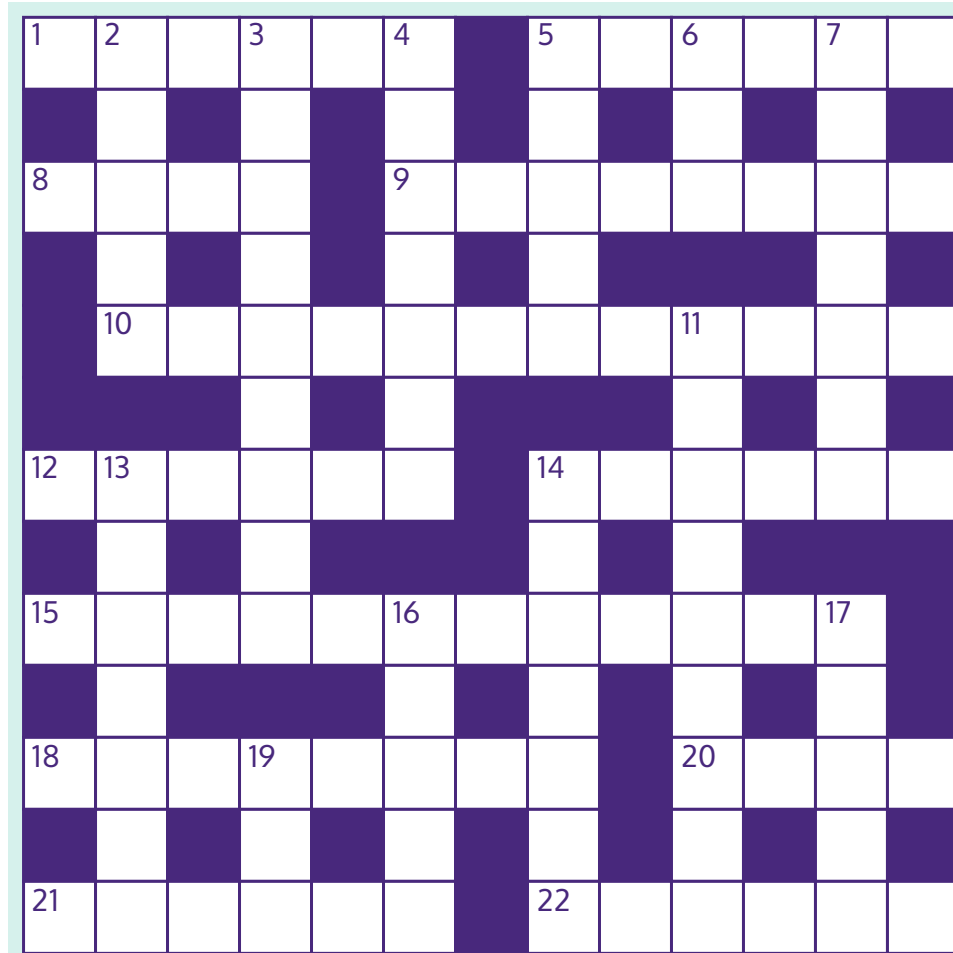
Lottery

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Solutions
see page 50

Down

- 2 Abhorrence (5)
- 3 Appraise (4,5)
- 4 Tiny room? (7)
- 5 Poke (5)
- 6 Direct (3)
- 7 Defeat (7)
- 11 Obvious choice (2-7)
- 13 Inert drug (7)
- 14 Believed (7)
- 16 Loud (5)
- 17 Opponent (5)
- 19 Tear (3)



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

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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.



Dana Power

Congratulations to Dana Power and his fundraising team, who walked 20 miles between football clubs in Birmingham and Wolverhampton dressed as Puff the Magic Dragon, Mr Blobby, Donald Duck and Batman! Together they raised over £5,000.



Haywood Hospital Stroke Ward

The amazing staff of the Haywood Hospital Stroke Rehabilitation Ward in Stoke-on-Trent climbed Snowdonia and raised over £1,000 for us. Thank you for your fantastic support!



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.



Driffield Junior School

A big thank you to Sophie and the staff, pupils and parents at Driffield Junior School, who walked 26.2 miles from Whitby to Scarborough and raised over £3,305. They decided to support us after Sophie's son Robin (pictured), had a stroke when he was just 16 months old.



Volunteer spotlight

Alan Thompson leads the Bridgend Stroke Survivors Group.

'I took over running the group in July 2024. It means a great deal to me - and I know it does to the others too. There's something powerful about sharing a space with others who 'get it.'

'For me, volunteering is like opening Christmas presents – each person I meet, each story I hear, each little bit of progress made - that joy is its own reward. If my story can give someone else belief, that's enough for me. I'm living proof that life doesn't end with stroke. And maybe with the right support, it's just beginning again.'

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

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

Crossword solution

Across: 1 Soften, 5 Nuance, 8 Link, 9 Rudiment, 10 Misdemeanour, 12 Spooky, 14 Tabard, 15 Walking on air, 18 Yearning, 20 Navy, 21 Comply, 22 Thrall

Down: 2 Odium, 3 Take stock, 4 Nursery, 5 Nudge, 6 Aim, 7 Conquer, 11 No-brainer, 13 Placebo, 14 Thought, 16 Noisy, 17 Rival, 19 Rip

50

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



Swim for Stroke

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Looking for other ways to get involved?

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