



Summer 2022

# Stroke News

For everyone affected by stroke

**Stroke**  
Association

"Research gives me hope."

**Grace and Prof Audrey  
explain why stroke  
research means  
everything to them**

## **This issue:**

- How we supported Emmerdale's stroke storyline
- Helping someone with their money
- Join our thrombectomy campaign
- Volunteers share their stories



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## Editor's letter

It's lovely to be back with you after my maternity leave. A big thank you to Nathalie for all her hard work on Stroke News over the past year.

Our cover star, Grace, had a stroke at 17. She received a new emergency treatment that helped to save her life. Prof Audrey Bowen was one of the first researchers funded through our lectureship scheme. On page 8, they explain why research means everything to stroke survivors.

This issue, we're also celebrating our amazing volunteers. We talk to UllaKarin and Ruth about supporting their local stroke groups (page 28). Shirley and John tell us why they love helping out at fundraising events (page 30).

And campaigner Chris, explains how you can raise awareness and make the voices of your stroke community heard (page 26) – including signing and returning our thrombectomy campaign open letter on page 24.

I hope you enjoy this issue, and please keep sharing your stories, ideas and suggestions.



**Christine Webster, Editor  
(and guest editor, James)**

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## Over to you

I'm a carer for my brother, Brian, who had a stroke in 2004, aged 56. He had a blood clot, followed by a bleed. I was told he'd never walk again, and that the quality of his life would be uncertain.

However, after four months of rehabilitation, Brian walked out of hospital on his own two feet. The ward sister told me that it was Brian's determination to get better from an early stage that made the difference.

Brian received good support from physiotherapists, occupational and speech therapists. But the stroke left him with weakness on the right side of his body, no use of his right hand, epilepsy and aphasia.

However, Brian is very independent and determined to live a good life. He has very little speech, but he is an avid reader. Brian is a serious watch and clock collector and although naturally right-handed, he's learnt to use only his left hand to such an extent that he can dismantle and repair wrist watches.

If my brother could recover just one thing, he would choose speech. We hope that one day science will discover a way to enable that. I hope my brother's story inspires others and shows you can live a good life after a stroke.

**Michael Finn**

Stroke Helpline: **0303 3033 100**

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Join our online community: **[mystrokeguide.com](https://mystrokeguide.com)**

Find information about stroke: **[stroke.org.uk/publications](https://stroke.org.uk/publications)**



**Do you have something to share?**

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## From our Chief Executive

We've talked a lot about **thrombectomy in Stroke News recently and heard from people whose lives have been changed thanks to this highly effective emergency treatment to remove blood clots from the brain. But now it's time to act.**

Thrombectomy isn't available for everyone who needs it. The majority of people who could have thrombectomy (around 10% of stroke patients) miss out completely.

Stroke doctors, nurses, paramedics and their teams are working hard to give thrombectomies to more stroke survivors. But a lack of staff, funding and resources means that whether you can have a thrombectomy depends on where and at what time you have your stroke.

But stroke can strike anyone, at any time. In our new Saving Brains report, we're urging the government to provide funding to make thrombectomy available 24/7, for everyone who needs it.

We need your help to make it happen. Please support our campaign by signing our open letter on page 24 or on [stroke.org.uk/SavingBrains](http://stroke.org.uk/SavingBrains).

You can also get involved in other ways, such as writing to your local politician, or meeting with them at one of our events or groups. Find out more on page 26.

However you choose to speak out about stroke, by raising awareness and campaigning on behalf of people affected by stroke, you'll be helping to make a huge difference to their lives.

**Juliet Bouverie OBE**



# Stroke research means everything

"Without stroke research, I would have died." Grace Russell had a stroke in 2010 when she was only 17. "I was driving to the gym and all of a sudden, I just couldn't feel my right side," she remembers. "I called my mum and she took me to hospital."

"They diagnosed me with a stroke and took out a third of my skull to allow my brain to swell. To do this, they cool your body down to almost hypothermia levels. It was new in research and they weren't sure of the chances it could give me, but they thought it was worth a shot. For me, that research was literally life or death."

"I was in a coma for two weeks, and when I woke up I couldn't

move my right side. I had to learn to read, write, talk, walk - everything again. It had a huge impact on my family. My mum had to wash me, change me, teach me how to do my hair again. Our lives changed dramatically – it was terrifying."

Professor Audrey Bowen is a stroke researcher at the University of Manchester, whose work focuses on rehabilitation and living with disability. "Stroke is life-changing," says Audrey. "Thanks to research into emergency treatments, like the one Grace received, people can now survive their stroke."

"But as Grace says, that's just the beginning of a long and often challenging journey through life after stroke. We need to focus on rehabilitation research too, so people can not just survive, but thrive."



**"Thanks to research into emergency treatments, like the one Grace received, people can now survive their stroke."**

**Professor Audrey Bowen**

Audrey was one of the first cohort of psychologists and physicians funded through the Stroke Association's lectureship scheme, and recently spoke about the opportunities this gave her at our Amazing Brains event in May. "The Stroke Association is the only organisation that is dedicated to funding research into ongoing rehabilitation for stroke survivors. Thanks to them, I've been able to work with stroke survivors and their families, health professionals and research students to investigate effective new treatments and therapies to improve the lives of people affected by stroke."

Research like this means everything to stroke survivors and their families. It means hope for a better recovery, greater independence and a future.

"If you look at me now you wouldn't think that I've had a stroke," says Grace. "Research helped me beat all the odds. But I'm still facing that recovery battle and I always will be. I suffer from post-stroke pain syndrome. Because of that, I'm in constant, horrendous pain. I'm generally a

very positive person, but when you are constantly in pain like that, it beats you down.

"My partner Kurt is the hand that reaches out and reminds me to use my TENS machine (which uses electrical impulses to reduce pain). He encourages me to get up and walk around as sitting around is just going to make me worse. Although I hate it at the time, I'm grateful afterwards. I just need a push to do it.



"When you have a stroke, the fear is that it'll happen again. And that fear never leaves you. So, for me and my family, the research that's being funded by the Stroke Association, is amazing. It gives you hope that if the worst was to happen, there's going to be more treatments and, even better, recovery is possible."

"Research helped me beat all the odds. But I'm still facing that recovery battle and I always will be."

Grace Russell

Learn more about our research at [stroke.org.uk/research](https://stroke.org.uk/research). You can also watch the presentations from Amazing Brains 2022, including Audrey's talk, at [stroke.org.uk/AmazingBrains](https://stroke.org.uk/AmazingBrains).



# Tips for managing long-term pain:



## Do some gentle exercise

– Activities like walking, swimming and gardening can get you moving. This helps to reduce pain by stretching stiff muscles and joints, and making you stronger and fitter. Exercise also releases endorphins, which make you feel happier.



## Take pain medication

– If suitable for you, over-the-counter painkillers, like paracetamol can help to reduce pain flare-ups so you can be more active. Don't wait until your pain is severe to take them as they'll be less effective.



## Try relaxation techniques

– Breathing exercises and meditation can help you to feel more in control and relaxed, relieving tension that might make the pain worse. Look for classes in your area, or download a relaxation app to guide you.



## Distract yourself

– Find something that challenges you or that you enjoy to help you to focus on something besides the pain. Hobbies like knitting, model building, puzzles or video games are good if your mobility is limited.



## Talk to others

– Pain can make you feel isolated, so reach out to family and friends for support. You can also find long-term pain support groups online and in your local area.



## Get a good night's sleep

– Do your best to stick to a normal sleep routine as sleep deprivation can make pain worse. If you're really struggling to sleep at night, talk to your GP.

For more information about pain after stroke, visit [stroke.org.uk/pain](https://stroke.org.uk/pain) or contact our Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or [helpline@stroke.org.uk](mailto:helpline@stroke.org.uk).

# Stroke research means everything.

We are the only organisation dedicated to funding research into ongoing stroke rehabilitation – because we know that making the best possible recovery means everything to stroke survivors and their loved ones.

Please donate what you can today at [stroke.org.uk/donating](https://stroke.org.uk/donating), by calling us on **0300 330 0740** or by completing the form below.

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## 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?

☐ Email ☐ Text ☐ Phone

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 [supportercare@stroke.org.uk](mailto:supportercare@stroke.org.uk). How we protect and use your personal data is set out in our privacy policy at [stroke.org.uk/privacy](https://stroke.org.uk/privacy).

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# Continuing your physical recovery after stroke

Moving and staying active after a stroke can help with your recovery and boost your mood and overall wellbeing. But many people have concerns about returning to exercising or aren't sure what to do or how to get started.

Rachel Cafferty from our Stroke Helpline shares some guidance:

## What happens when NHS physiotherapy comes to an end?


The amount of therapy you get can vary and often people feel disappointed when it comes to an end. If you feel that you need more therapy, talk to your GP as they may be able to make a referral for more physio. However, this isn't always available. If you find it hard to get the support you need, call our Helpline for information.

Sometimes people choose to pay privately for physio. Your GP may be able to tell you about local private services. You can also search for private physios


in your area through an organisation called Physio First ([physiofirst.org.uk](http://physiofirst.org.uk)), who have a search option on their website.


## How can I keep active and carry on my recovery?


Your GP can advise you about resuming exercise safely, and might be able to refer you to specialist exercise or rehabilitation groups. You can also:

 **Look locally** - There may be chair-based exercise groups or classes aimed at people with long-term health conditions in your area. A good place to start can be to ask your local leisure centre if they offer any suitable classes. Often they'll have staff who are trained in supporting people with health conditions to exercise safely.





 **Join our online exercise programme** – We have a four-week and a 12-week online stroke recovery exercise programme on **mystrokeguide.com**. These are exercise videos you can do at home. There are exercises for different mobility levels, so you can choose which is right for you.

 **Move more at home** - You can also find ways to add movement into your daily life. For example, gardening tasks like weeding and digging can build strength, stamina and improve skills using your hands.

 **How can I help my loved one to keep active?**  
If your loved one is still having physiotherapy it can be helpful

to have a chat with the therapist and ask for a list of exercises or tasks you can do at home to keep their recovery going.

 **Set goals** - Often people find it helpful to set daily goals for activity. For example, sitting up in a chair, walking around the garden or taking part in an exercise group. Be patient with your loved one, and gently encourage them to keep working towards their goal.

 **Make it fun** - It's easy to feel as a carer you should be doing more. But it's ok to keep things simple and do things that you and your loved one find enjoyable.

# Supporting Emmerdale's stroke storyline

If you're a fan of ITV's Emmerdale, you'll know that popular character, Marlon Dingle, played by actor Mark Charnock, recently had a life-threatening stroke.



**Mark Charnock as Marlon Dingle**

We've worked closely with the Emmerdale team, involving stroke survivors, stroke consultants and experts to make sure the story about Marlon's stroke and recovery is as honest as possible.

**Stroke survivor Nick Hounsfield supported Mark Charnock with his portrayal of a stroke survivor.**

Nick had a stroke in 2020, aged 46. Advising on the Emmerdale storyline gave him the chance to work through "what was going on in my weird brain".

"I talked to Mark and tried to describe the emotion you feel, what's going on in your head, how you feel after and how it affects the people around you," says Nick. "I know Mark feels a responsibility to get it right for stroke survivors and their families."

"I got really emotional watching the scenes of Marlon's stroke. Since the episode aired, I've had so many people thanking me for the awareness and recounting their own stories. I feel more connected to other stroke survivors."

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**Nick Hounsfield and  
Mark Charnock**



**Consultant Stroke Physician, Professor Martin James, worked on the script.**

"We wanted to ensure that the story unfolded in a realistic way and in a realistic time-frame," says Martin. "I advised on Marlon's acute treatment, thrombectomy, what doctors would say to Marlon and his fiancée, Rhona and on Marlon's speech recovery. Those of us that speak to people with aphasia have an ear for it, but we forget that it isn't familiar to a lot of people. We helped the team to write scripts that reflect how difficult communication is for people with aphasia and for their families."

"I think so much good can come from this storyline. I've talked about it with patients and given Marlon as an example because of how accurate it is. Seeing their condition on a popular soap must be a real encouragement for those who live with aphasia every day."





**Rhona supports Marlon with his recovery at home**

**Josh Murphy from the Stroke Association was on set to advise on the story:**

"I met with Emmerdale's story and script researchers and it was clear that they wanted an honest and accurate portrayal of stroke," says Josh. "Although I've worked with people affected by stroke for over 10 years, no amount of professional experience can emulate what it's like to be personally affected, so I made sure that the show's creators and actors connected with people who have lived experience."

"I went to the Emmerdale filming studios in Leeds. They ran through each scene before it was filmed and we were on hand to spot inaccuracies in Mark's aphasia portrayal, and details like Marlon's drink not being thickened."



"I hope that Marlon's story will increase awareness of the FAST test and the importance of treating stroke as an emergency. And I hope that more people understand that there is hope after stroke and that with support, encouragement and hard work, people can make positive steps forward in their recovery."

Get stroke information and support at [stroke.org.uk](http://stroke.org.uk), [mystrokeguide.com](http://mystrokeguide.com) or call our Helpline on **0303 3033 100**.

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# Thrombectomy saves brains

Thrombectomy is a game-changing treatment for stroke. For the 1 in 10 stroke patients who are suitable, it significantly reduces their chance of disabilities like paralysis, blindness and aphasia - and in some cases even saves lives.



**You can help!** Please sign and return our open letter on page 24. Or sign online at [stroke.org.uk/SavingBrains](https://stroke.org.uk/SavingBrains).

We're calling on the government to provide funding to make this treatment available to everyone who needs it.

Dr Sanjeev Nayak set up the first 24/7 mechanical thrombectomy service in the UK. He tells us about his work and why he's supporting our campaign.

"I'm an Interventional Neuroradiologist. I treat blood vessel conditions in the brain and spine, including strokes. I first learned about thrombectomy

while training in Austria. They'd accidentally discovered that you could use a small wire cage called a stent to remove a clot. I saw them use the technique for strokes with great results.

When I became a consultant at the Royal Stoke Hospital, our data showed people with strokes caused by large clots in their brains often died or were permanently disabled. Something radical had to be done. So in 2009, we introduced the UK's first thrombectomy service for our patients.

When we do a thrombectomy, we insert a stent into an artery in the groin and thread it up into the brain to pull out the clot. It can be performed up to 24 hours after a stroke, but is most effective in the first six hours.

The results are life-changing. Someone who might have had severe disabilities can now go home to live independently. It's one of the most effective treatments ever discovered.

As a doctor, the feeling that you're making such a difference to someone's life is better than anything. But currently it's a postcode lottery. If you're not in the right area, or you have a stroke after 5pm - or at the weekend - it's bad luck for you.

We need to make thrombectomy available 24/7 across the UK. By campaigning with us, you can put pressure on the government to make funding available to deliver thrombectomy. We need to act now so more people can benefit."



# Support our campaign

It's vital that thrombectomy is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for everyone who needs it. Please sign our open letter to the UK Government urging them to act on the recommendations in our Saving Brains report.

Your name:

Your postcode:

## Keep up-to-date with our campaign

If you'd like us to send you emails about this campaign and others, please enter your email address:

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Dr Sanjeev Nayak

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LIFE IN MOTION

# What does campaigning actually involve?

There are lots of different ways to campaign, and while the idea of engaging with your politicians might seem a little intimidating, there are easy, accessible and effective ways to do just that.

Chris Mahood from Annalong in Northern Ireland has been involved with the Stroke Association for roughly nine years, currently as the lead volunteer for South Down Stroke Support Group, but also as a campaigner.

Most recently Chris took part in our Make Stroke a Priority campaign before the Northern Ireland Assembly elections on 5 May. He joined us for a meeting with Patrick Brown, a candidate in his area, who has since been elected as an MLA (member of the legislative assembly).

"It was good meeting with Patrick," says Chris. "I was able to tell him more about my stroke and the work that the Stroke Association does, like the stroke support group that I volunteer with.

"But what I really wanted him to know was that, although the impact of stroke is life long, it doesn't mean that life is over. With the right rehabilitation and support people can get on with their lives. I enjoy life, I love going to festivals and concerts and I even took up DJ-ing recently."

This is an important message and central to our campaign for better investment in stroke rehabilitation services and post-stroke support for patients. It's a message we'll keep sharing with politicians and an area where, if we work together, we can make real progress.

## We can't say it enough:

### Thank you!

The most important part of a campaign is you! A big thank you for working with us to make stroke a priority!

## What can you do?

Here's how you can campaign for people affected by stroke throughout the UK:

- ✓ Email your politicians about stroke.
- ✓ Follow us and share our posts on Facebook or Twitter.
- ✓ Invite your local politicians to one of our events or groups.
- ✓ Join with us to meet your local politician.



## How can you join us?

Wherever you are in the UK, you can stay up to date and get involved with our latest campaigns by joining the Campaigns Network. Visit [stroke.org.uk/campaigns](https://stroke.org.uk/campaigns) or call **0207 566 0341** to find out more.





# Supporting stroke groups

We have an amazing UK-wide network of stroke support groups. Run by our incredible volunteers, the groups create a safe and supportive space to try things again, learn more about stroke and to build your confidence as you rebuild your life.

After the disruption of the pandemic, many of our groups are meeting up again. But we need more volunteers to make sure they can keep going and be there for as many stroke survivors and carers as possible.

Volunteering is a great way to put your skills to good use and make a real difference. From making tea and having a chat, to leading a group or managing their finances, there are lots of ways to get involved.



UllaKarin Clark is a group leader at the Wokingham Stroke Support and Recovery Group. "My mother had a stroke in 2004 and had to learn to walk again," she says.

"She recovered and was able to go home and live independently. But I had to fight to get her the necessary physiotherapy. I wanted to help people like my mum, so I started volunteering at our local stroke group."

With like-minded volunteers, UllaKarin organises activities and looks after the running of the group. "I enjoy volunteering – it's very rewarding to work with stroke survivors and see they're getting better and regaining confidence."

How you choose to give your time can be flexible. Ruth Blair from our Coalfields Life after Stroke Group, volunteers as the treasurer remotely. "At first I was apprehensive about what would be involved," she says. "But it'd be such a shame if the group



**Members of the Wokingham Stroke Support and Recovery Group enjoy a day trip**

stopped meeting and I knew with my help they could continue. I received online training. It was very straightforward. I have a Stroke Association point of contact too, if I need any help.

"I'm so pleased I gave it a go. I only spend around 15 minutes each week doing some admin for the group, but it means they can continue to meet, have fun and enjoy those couple of hours together. I would recommend it to anyone who has a small amount of time to offer - just do it."

Visit [stroke.org.uk/groups](https://stroke.org.uk/groups) to find your local support group. Learn more about our volunteering opportunities at [stroke.org.uk/volunteering](https://stroke.org.uk/volunteering) or by calling **0303 3033 100**.

## **Do you lead a stroke support group?**

On 10-11 October 2022, we're hosting our virtual Stroke Group Network Conference for stroke group leaders and volunteers around the UK. It's a great opportunity to meet others, share ideas and learn more about running a sustainable group and supporting members.

To find out more, visit [stroke.org.uk/GroupConference](https://stroke.org.uk/GroupConference) or call **01527 903 930**.

# Cheering you on

Shirley Rolfe and John Thorpe from South London have volunteered hundreds of hours, supporting thousands of people who fundraise for the Stroke Association. So what keeps bringing them back?

"We started volunteering in 2008 with the Thames Bridges Bike Ride," says Shirley. "Since then we have taken on a variety of volunteering roles from cheering on runners and riders in sponsored events, to bucket collections and blood pressure checks."

The couple have both experienced the devastating impact of stroke. Shirley's dad had a stroke when she was only 10 and sadly died from a second stroke in 1981. John's mum passed away after a stroke in 2003.

"We volunteer all over London, from Croydon in the south to Wembley in the north and all points in between," Shirley tells us. "We've helped at many cheer points including the Royal Parks Half Marathon in Hyde Park. Seeing the Stroke Association cheer point helps runners feel we're there for them and gives them a boost to help them on to the finish."

"Everyone is friendly, our efforts are always appreciated and we have a lovely community of volunteers from all walks of life. We've enjoyed the opportunity to try something different since taking early retirement, challenging ourselves and meeting loads of new people. We particularly enjoy participating in the receptions following the London Marathon, where we greet the runners and hand out meal vouchers to them and their families. It's inspiring to see how much money some of them manage to raise. Every occasion is different!

"If you're thinking about volunteering, give it a go! There's usually a good mix of old and new faces and everyone is welcome. You also get the satisfaction of knowing you've helped in a very worthwhile cause."



You can find out more and register to be a volunteer at events around the UK by visiting [stroke.org.uk/eventsvolunteering](https://stroke.org.uk/eventsvolunteering), calling **0300 3300 740** or emailing [eventlogistics@stroke.org.uk](mailto:eventlogistics@stroke.org.uk).



## A day in the life of a cheer point volunteer



"A typical day at a cheer point often means an early start but there's usually a real buzz as we get set up before the event.

First we find our cheer point - look out for the purple banner - and locate the toilets and cafes. We help to set up the Stroke Association banners and see what we have to get us noticed, such as silly hats (in purple, of course), whistles and clackers.

Once the event starts our role is to spot and count our runners and

to give them a big cheer. Making a noise is very therapeutic!

We also look for any celebrity runners - we once got high-fived by John Altman, aka Nick Cotton in EastEnders, who was running for the Stroke Association. Nasty Nick is quite nice really!

We stay until all our runners have gone through, then help to take down the banners and clear away any rubbish."

**Shirley and John**

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# Getting special assistance when travelling by plane

After the pandemic, it's exciting to be able to travel further afield to enjoy a well-deserved holiday. But airports aren't the easiest places to navigate, especially if you or your travel companion has mobility, sensory or cognitive difficulties.

The good news is that most airports have accessible facilities and trained staff who can assist you from your arrival at the airport, to boarding the plane. Our partners, AllClear Travel Insurance, share their tips for arranging assistance when travelling by plane:

**1 Ask in advance:** Speak to your travel agent and airline at least 48 hours before travelling so they can organise help for you.

**2 Be clear about your needs:** Tell them what help you need, or any conditions you have that might make travelling through an airport challenging. This will help the assistance service to tailor their support to meet your needs and avoid delays. For example,

if you get overwhelmed in crowds, the assistance service may be able to organise extra help getting through check-in and security.

**3 Ask questions:** Make a list of any questions about the airport or airline's accessibility services, how they work or who to contact, to give you peace of mind. For example, what are the walking distances to the departure gates? Are there wheelchairs on the flight to take you to the toilet?

**4 Keep a written confirmation:** Bring a record of your assistance request to the airport with you, along with contact numbers for the assistance services, in case things don't go to plan.



Learn more about holidays after a stroke by reading our guide on [stroke.org.uk/holiday](https://stroke.org.uk/holiday). Or call **0300 3300 740** to get a printed copy.

**5 Visit your GP before travelling:** Your GP can provide you with a fit-to-fly certificate if you need one. You should also request enough of your medication to last the length of your trip and cover any delays.

**6 Buy comprehensive travel insurance:** This will ensure that you're covered if there's an unexpected medical emergency at the airport or at your destination.

You can also call the airport directly to find out about their services. Or visit [ego.net/specialassistance.htm](https://ego.net/specialassistance.htm) for their guide to the special assistance services available at the UK's major airports.

AllClear donate up to 20%\* of your premium to the Stroke Association when you purchase a policy. To find out more about AllClear, visit [stroke.org.uk/allclear](https://stroke.org.uk/allclear) or call **0808 168 8733**.

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# "I can do things I thought I'd never do again"

Avid bowls fan, Alan Thompson, 74 from Llantrisant in south Wales, was enjoying an active retirement when a stroke left him unable to walk or talk. He explains how small steps helped him to rebuild his life and get back to the bowls mat.

"I had a stroke when I was 71, while undergoing emergency open heart surgery. As a result, I spent 14 weeks in hospital. I was discharged home in a wheelchair, with carers coming to attend to me four times every day.

"When I was told I'd had a stroke, it was the deepest, darkest moment I'd ever known. I honestly thought that a normal, natural life was now over. I know better now, but the image I had then was of a life of total disability and not being able to do anything ever again.

"I found out about an initiative run by the Stroke Association called Movement to Music, where you exercise to music while sitting in a chair. This not only showed me that there were plenty of

movements I could still do, but increased my confidence and willingness to get more active. It made me realise that life was not over - in fact, I could do things I thought I'd never do again.

"That inspired me to take up virtual bowls. Through this I got my enthusiasm back for playing bowls, and I've now started playing with my local indoor bowls club again. This has really made me feel as if there is life after a stroke.

"One of my local hospitals runs courses that enable people with all manner of disabilities to regain their driving licence. A year and a half after my stroke, I was able to get back behind the wheel. This gave me back my independence and enabled

me to do things like shopping, visiting family and going to watch my local rugby club.

"None of this would have been possible without the support of the Stroke Association and my occupational health team. And it's made me realise that yes, I do have a life – a different one but an enjoyable one. And for that I'm eternally grateful."

"I know better now, but the image I had then was of a life of total disability and not being able to do anything ever again."



Visit [stroke.org.uk/exercise](https://stroke.org.uk/exercise) or call **0303 3033 100** to find out more about getting active after a stroke.

# A Christmas Robin

Congratulations to Diane Finnegan, the winner of our 2022 Christmas card competition, with her brilliant painting 'A Christmas Robin'.

Diane, 72, had a TIA (transient ischaemic attack or mini-stroke) in 2020. Feeling low and struggling to come to terms with what had happened to her, Diane reached out for help.

"I wasn't coping very well, so I called the care team that had supported me when I arrived home from hospital," says Diane. "They contacted the Stroke Association on my behalf, and soon after, Support Coordinator Linda Bolton called me. Talking to Linda, I felt I'd finally found someone who could listen to and understand what I was feeling."

Linda encouraged Diane to start doing things she was interested in to help with her recovery –



particularly art, which had been so important to her before she had a stroke.

"I had been painting for over 20 years and it was a big part of my life," says Diane. "But when I picked up the brushes to start mixing paint after my stroke, it was very apparent I had lost most of these skills."

Determined to get back to what she loved, and encouraged by her friends and family, Diane practised by painting birthday cards for her loved ones.



"Two years on, I still don't paint the way I did before my stroke. But I have managed to try other styles, which I think is retraining my brain. I also joined an art club for inspiration and company. This is helping me to move forward."

"I'm delighted that my painting of the robin who visits my garden every year won the competition. Being in my garden and enjoying the natural beauty around me has helped my recovery in a big way, and reconnected me with my art. I'm glad I can share my little friend with others to raise money for stroke survivors and their families."

  All of our lovely cards, including Diane's beautiful 'A Christmas Robin' design, are available from our Christmas shop from 9 August. Visit [stroke.org.uk/Christmas](https://stroke.org.uk/Christmas) or call **0300 330 0740** to order yours.

If you'd like to get creative and submit your design for the 2023 stroke survivor Christmas card competition, visit [stroke.org.uk/cardcomp23](https://stroke.org.uk/cardcomp23) or phone **01604 687775** to find out how to submit your work.



# Buying a wheelchair accessible vehicle

If you or your loved one uses a wheelchair since their stroke, you may be considering getting a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV). These are cars or vans that are specially adapted so a wheelchair user can drive or travel as a passenger.

Purchasing a WAV can be daunting, especially the first time you come to look for one. So how do you make sure you get a vehicle that's right for you? Our partners, WAVMob, a specialist WAV dealership, share some questions to help you think about what you need before you start looking:

## What size vehicle do you need?

You can get WAVs that range from compact two-seaters to nine-seaters with room for all the family and the dog, so there are plenty of options.

But it's also important to make sure you choose a car that's comfortable to drive and park. Think carefully about what you'll mainly be using your vehicle for, how much time you'll spend in the car and who else is likely to be a regular passenger, so you can get the best vehicle for your needs.

## Automatic or manual?

All WAVs come with automatic and manual transmission options, so this is largely down to driver preference. However, automatic gearboxes are easier to adapt to enable wheelchair users to drive.

## Ramp or lift?

You can get ramps that operate electrically or manually. Lifts and electric ramps are more convenient but they're more expensive and need extra maintenance.

Manual ramps are a cheaper option, but you may need help to lower and raise them. You also need to be able to propel yourself up the slope, or rely on someone to push you. If this isn't possible or practical, you may need a winch system to help pull you up instead.



For more guidance about driving after a stroke visit [stroke.org.uk/driving](https://stroke.org.uk/driving) or call our Helpline on **0303 3033 100**.

WavMob offer advice and support to help you find your perfect vehicle. To find out more and get a free consultation visit [wavmob.co.uk](https://wavmob.co.uk) or call **02392 245 570**.

# Helping someone with their money

Strokes can happen suddenly and have a huge impact, including on finances. If a loved one has had a stroke and you're suddenly left to deal with their finances, here are some tips on how to manage that.

## Get a third party mandate

Many banks allow you to operate a bank account for another person on a short-term basis (usually about four months). This is known as a third-party mandate. It's an agreement between the account holder and a nominee they trust (such as a relative or carer) to access bank accounts, pay bills or withdraw money.

To do this, the account holder can write to the bank or use the bank's third party mandate form, which you can find on the bank's website. If your loved one is unable to organise a third party mandate, then you can apply for an emergency third party mandate by contacting

the bank and explaining the situation.

## Contact the benefits office

If your loved one is claiming benefits, a relative or carer must call the office that pays the benefit as soon as possible. This is because claims may be stopped or reduced if a hospital stay is not reported. You can apply to become an 'appointee' so you can manage their benefits, including state pension. As an appointee, you're responsible for making and maintaining their benefit claims. Someone from the Department of Work and Pensions will assess you and the person you care for, to check that an appointee is needed and that you are suitable.

To apply to be an appointee, phone the helpline for the benefits they're receiving. For example, if they receive Disability Living Allowance, contact the disability benefits helpline. To find out more about becoming an appointee, visit your government's website and search 'benefits appointee':

England and Wales: **gov.uk**

Northern Ireland: **nidirect.gov.uk**

Scotland: **mygov.scot**

## Check for any financial support

Stroke can turn your finances upside down. If you or your loved ones find yourselves struggling, check what support might be available to you. For example, if you live in rented property, you might be able to get benefits or grants from your local council to help with your rent costs. If you're a homeowner on certain benefits, you might be eligible for Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI), to help pay interest on loans or mortgages. It's also worth contacting your energy supplier, who may be able to offer you a

payment plan. The British Gas Energy Trust also supports people facing financial hardship, and you don't have to be a British Gas customer.



Read our 'Benefits and financial assistance' factsheet at **[stroke.org.uk/benefits](https://stroke.org.uk/benefits)** or call **0300 3300 740** to order a printed copy.



# Puzzles

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

## Word search

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

Alder	Oak
Ash	Pine
Beech	Rowan
Chestnut	Sycamore
Hazel	Willow

## Across

- 2 Thin slice (5)  
4 Unmissable (4-3)  
8 Perfumes (4,2,7)  
9 Series of questions (9)  
10 Produce litter (3)  
11 Soothe (9)  
15 Centre (3)  
16 Famous (4-5)  
17 Given to precise thinking (13)  
19 Exemplar (7)  
20 Toolbox user (5)

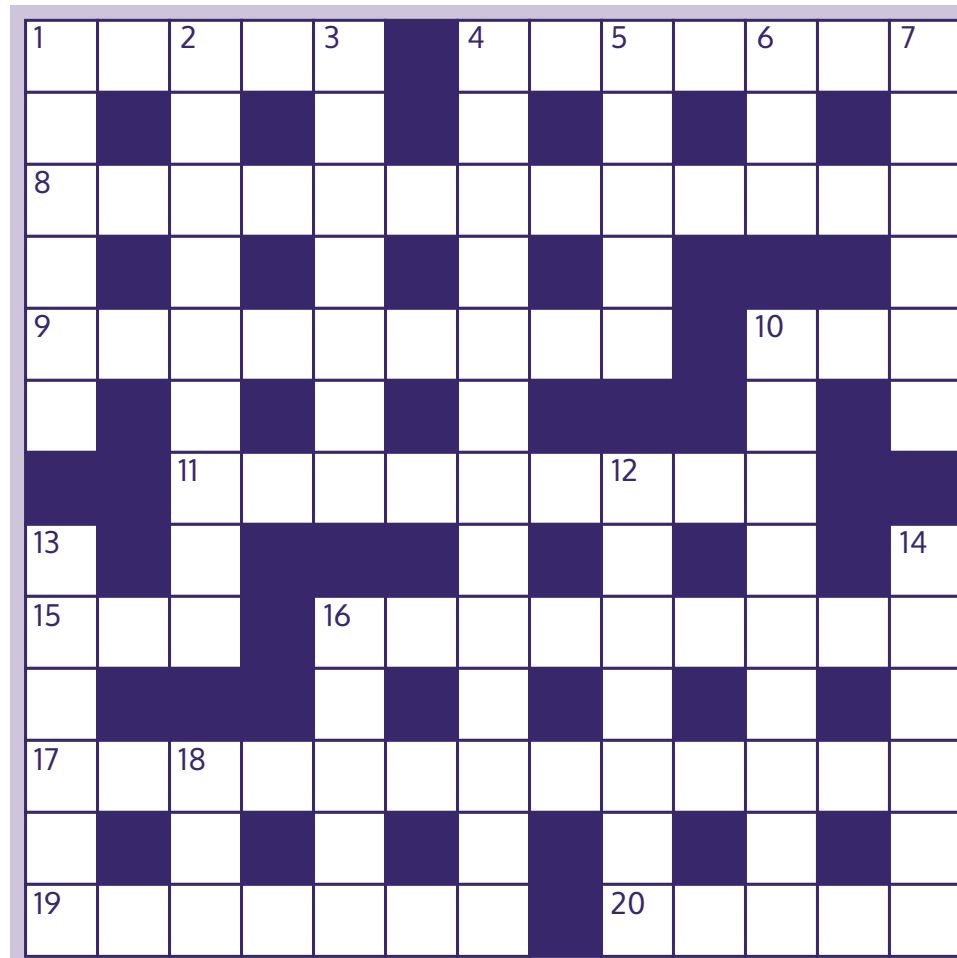
## Lottery

For your chance to win £1,000 every week, play the Stroke Association Charity Lottery. Find out more at [lottery.stroke.org.uk](http://lottery.stroke.org.uk).

**Solutions**  
see page 50

## Down

- 1 Yank (6)  
2 Thwart (9)  
3 Drastic (7)  
4 Perfidious (13)  
5 Oregon's capital (5)  
6 Droop (3)  
7 Not liable (6)  
10 Boy wonder quality (9)  
12 Clumsy (7)  
13 Act without restraint (3,3)  
14 Working effectively (2,4)  
16 Inappropriate (5)  
18 Pitch (3)



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

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# Rebuilding lives after stroke

Our charity supports people to live the best life they can after stroke. But rebuilding lives is a team effort and we need your help. A huge thank you to everyone who's fundraised, volunteered and campaigned with us. Your support means we can reach even more people who need us.



## Dave Kennedy

Thank you and well done to Fundraising Champion, Dave Kennedy, who took part in the Birmingham Great Run in May. Dave raised £1,130 in memory of his mum, who sadly passed away after a stroke in 2021.

## Patrick Garces Fernandes and Kady Chatman

Congratulations to our 68 amazing Cardiff Half Marathon runners. Together they raised over £30,400! Among them were Patrick Garces Fernandes and Kady Chatman. Patrick's partner, Kady's brother, Mark Leather, received support from us after his stroke in 2018. They raised over £1,800 to help us continue our work.



Find out how you can get involved and support us on p50 or make a donation at [stroke.org.uk/donating](https://stroke.org.uk/donating).

## How does your donation help?



£10 could help us provide group support to stroke survivors, giving them confidence for their recovery.



£25 could help someone find hope, emotional support and information through a call to our Helpline.



£50 could help fund research facilitating life-changing discoveries to help rebuild lives after stroke.



## Goodwood

We're delighted to be Goodwood Estate's charity of 2022. Thanks to the Goodwood team and our volunteers, who helped us to raise £3,748 at the Members Weekend in April. If you'd like to help with collections at future Goodwood events, contact [charlotte.lee@stroke.org.uk](mailto:charlotte.lee@stroke.org.uk).



## Volunteer spotlight

Sheila Tagholm volunteers with the Positive Action for Strokes group in Rhuddlan.

"In 2009 my husband had a stroke. Our coordinator introduced us to the Rhuddlan club. It met on Wednesdays and after dropping him off, I looked forward to some 'me time'.

"That didn't last long – I became a volunteer and I've now been doing this for over 13 years. Volunteering means I can contribute by helping other stroke survivors and their families, as I know what they're going through."

"I'll continue to support new members of our group as everyone is welcome."

To find out how you can volunteer, visit [stroke.org.uk/yoursupport](https://stroke.org.uk/yoursupport).

# Join Team Stroke

Get involved and fundraise at home, or join us in person as more exciting face-to-face events return:



## Kiltwalks

Wear your tartan and Kiltwalk for #TeamStroke. Join us at events in Dundee on 21 August, Edinburgh on 18 September and virtually on 7-9 October. Find out more at [stroke.org.uk/kiltwalks22](https://stroke.org.uk/kiltwalks22).

## STEPtember

Are you up for a challenge? Join us as we take on 12,000 steps a day in September to raise vital funds to support stroke survivors. Sign up at: [stroke.org.uk/stepember](https://stroke.org.uk/stepember).

## Autumn Cardiff Half Marathon

**2 October**  
If you missed out on the spring event, why not get training for the autumn run instead? Get involved and help rebuild lives at [stroke.org.uk/cardiffhalf22](https://stroke.org.uk/cardiffhalf22).

For more events and ways to get involved in our work, see [stroke.org.uk](https://stroke.org.uk).

## Crossword solution

**Across:** 1 Wafer, 4 Must-see, 8 Eaux de cologne, 9 Catechism, 10 Pup, 11 Alleviate, 15 Eye, 16 Well-known, 17 Ratiocinative, 19 Paragon, 20 DIYer

**Down:** 1 Wrench, 2 Frustrate, 3 Radical, 4 Machiavellian, 5 Salem, 6 Sag, 7 Exempt, 10 Precocity, 12 Awkward, 13 Let rip, 14 In gear, 16 Wrong, 18 Tar

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

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