

# StrokeNews



WINTER 2016

For everyone affected by stroke

## Lost for words

How Lorraine and her family are overcoming the challenges of aphasia

### A New Era for Stroke

Update on our Government petition

### Resolution Runs

Challenge yourself in the new year

### Stay Well This Winter

Looking after your health during the colder months

[stroke.org.uk](http://stroke.org.uk)

Stroke  
association

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# Welcome...

The ability to communicate easily is something many of us take for granted. But imagine suddenly not being able to speak, read, write or make yourself understood?

After a stroke, one in three people experience aphasia or similar difficulties with speaking and understanding. In this edition, we hear from stroke survivors with aphasia who are finding new ways to communicate. Discover how local singing and art groups are providing Lorraine with new avenues of expression (page 6) and how expert support is benefiting Andrew (page 30).

Thank you to everyone who completed our readers' survey in the summer issue and signed our 'A New Era for Stroke' petition - an update on the impact your support has already had is on page 22.

I joined the Stroke Association in August and look forward to meeting *Stroke News* readers in the future. I hope you enjoy this edition.

**Christine Webster**  
Editor



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## Life After Stroke Awards

Meet 2016's winners and find out how to nominate someone inspirational for the 2017 awards.

**We're the leading stroke charity in the UK. We're here for you:**



### Stroke Helpline

Call confidentially  
on **0303 3033 100**



### Life After Stroke

**Services** Find support  
in your area at **stroke.org.uk/  
local-support**



### Clubs and groups

provide a lifeline.  
See **stroke.org.uk/clubs**



### Free factsheets

guide you through all aspects  
of stroke. See **stroke.org.uk/  
shop**



### Financial help

through  
Life After Stroke Grants.  
See **stroke.org.uk/grants**



# Over to you



I was interested in your holiday articles and would like to share our experiences. I had my stroke in 1995 when I was 48 but was determined to recover as much as I could. My husband and I used our respite grant to go to Centre Parcs. The site and lodges are adapted for disabled use and the staff are very helpful. We eat out, take plenty of DVDs and relax.

Life is hard but still good even with stroke. With carers coming in three times a week, cleaners for two hours a week and someone to help with the garden, my husband now has time to himself.



**Sharron Rennison**

I enjoyed reading the summer edition of *Stroke News*. What struck me is how young many people are when they experience a stroke. I had a stroke at 48 and thought I was young, but then found myself in hospital next to a 23 year old. Many still think stroke only happens to people in their later years and would be surprised to know the facts. The people featured in your magazine are such an inspiration and it is good to read their stories.



**Alison Combes**

**Do you have something to share?**



Write to us at *Stroke News*, Stroke Association House, 240 City Road, London, EC1V 2PR or email [strokenews@stroke.org.uk](mailto:strokenews@stroke.org.uk)

## From our Chief Executive

Over the last few months, I've loved meeting and hearing from people connected to stroke across the UK.

Inspiring volunteers in Edinburgh and Glasgow told me about the positive benefits of volunteering after stroke. I've experienced chair yoga and upper limb mobility exercises in Cardiff, an amazing speech and language therapy group in Belfast, and had the benefit of attending my first UK Stroke Club Conference in Nottingham.

The more I learn about your experiences, the more I am reminded how important our work is. We absolutely have to do all that we can to ensure that everyone who has a stroke gets the right support, no matter where they live or what type of stroke they have.

**February**

In February we'll share the FAST campaign again to help people recognise the signs of a stroke.

**April**

*Know Your Blood Pressure* in April will help more people to reduce their risk of stroke. Spread the word and encourage your friends and family to get involved.

Thanks to *Stroke News* readers for making me feel so welcome in my first few months at the Stroke Association. Please keep telling me about what matters to you – it's the reason we're all here.

**Juliet Bouverie**



**Juliet (far left) with members of the Belfast Speech and Language Therapy Group**

# Lost for

Shortly after her 60th birthday, Lorraine Dunn had a stroke. She was in a coma for weeks and her husband Trevor was told she might never walk, talk or understand anyone again.

The grandmother of eight defied expectations by waking from the coma, but lost mobility in her right side and is unable to speak.

"Communication problems were very bad to start with, because Lorraine couldn't say any words at all," recalls Trevor. "It's hard when you've been married 44 years and you suddenly can't have a conversation anymore. Lorraine understands everything I say and knows what she wants to say but can't get it out."

Aphasia affects the language centres of the brain. More than 350,000 people in the UK have the condition, yet few of us know about it or how to help. This can be isolating and frustrating for

people with aphasia. Lorraine's family have found ways to help her communicate and do their best to make sure she doesn't feel isolated by her aphasia.

"I talk to her as normal," says Trevor. "If she can, she'll answer in one or two words, or some days three or four. She occasionally uses an iPad to help her speak. She can shout my name now - and I get told off!"

Lorraine and Trevor spend a lot of time with their grandchildren. The youngest don't remember a time when Lorraine could talk, but realise she is learning. "They talk to her which helps with her speech. She's found it hard that she can't communicate with them, but she's improving." ▶

# words





Although Lorraine is unable to talk, remarkably she can sing. "I was visiting her in hospital one day when she started singing 'Show me the way to go home'. I was amazed because she'd not uttered a sentence before then. She can't speak but her singing is word perfect." With the assistance of her Coordinator Caroline Shepherd, Lorraine helped to set up the Stroke Association singing group. "She now sings twice a week and it has helped her speech a lot," says Trevor.

With the encouragement of her Speech and Language Therapist, Lorraine learnt to write, paint and draw with her left hand. She now sells her art and has raised over £4000 for charity. She is also learning to walk again and has participated in Step Out for Stroke on three occasions, raising £1500. She put some of this money towards an iPad for her stroke group, to enable newcomers with speech difficulties to participate more easily. Lorraine also painted a Christmas card for the Stroke Association which was recently sent to all our supporters to highlight the experience of living with aphasia.

Although they still face many challenges, Lorraine and Trevor remain positive. "Lorraine's always laughing and making others laugh. It must be very frustrating for people with aphasia, but if you persist with the support available especially from the Stroke Association, you can improve over time. As Lorraine says, don't give up, you can get there."



"Lorraine's always laughing and making others laugh."

### Help more people like Lorraine get their words back

The Stroke Association helps people with aphasia to learn new ways of communicating. With your support we can make sure effective, expert help is available throughout their recovery.

Your donation will help us to:



Train our staff to support stroke survivors with aphasia



Support volunteers that run stroke communication support groups



Invest in research that will find new treatments for aphasia

For more information and to find out how you can support stroke survivors who are lost for words visit [stroke.org.uk/nowords](https://stroke.org.uk/nowords)

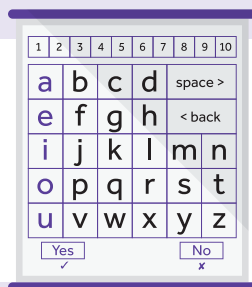
# Communication aids and support tools



If you have aphasia, there are some useful resources to help you communicate.

## → Charts and books

Alphabet boards and symbol sets display large letters or images that you can point to.



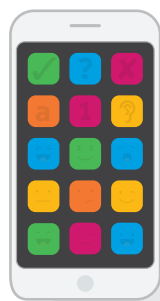
## → Voice output aids

Voice output aids use a computer-generated voice to play pre-recorded messages aloud. Some have a keyboard so you can type your own message.



## → Smartphones and tablet computers

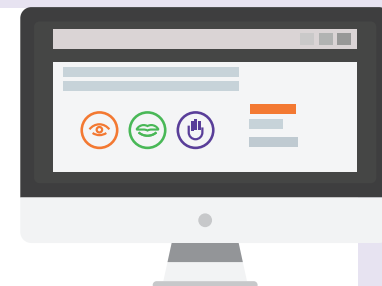
You can get communication apps for your smartphone or tablet. There are apps that help you with speech, and wordless picture dictionaries.



See [www.aphasiasoftwarefinder.org](http://www.aphasiasoftwarefinder.org) for information about aphasia apps

## → Computer programmes

Computer programmes can help you practise your speech at home. Get advice from a speech and language therapist first about the best software and apps for you.



## → Medical passport

A booklet of icons, pictures and words relating to health matters can help you to discuss your medical needs with your doctor.



### Top tips for communication recovery:

- 1. Practise** – but make sure you take a break if you feel tired.
- 2. Explain** – help people to understand your needs, perhaps by using a communication card (page 12).
- 3. Laugh** – it's a good way to help you to relax.
- 4. Get support** – communication problems can feel very frustrating. Let those close to you know how you are feeling.

You can buy communication aids and tools from our shop via [stroke.org.uk/communicationhelp](http://stroke.org.uk/communicationhelp). Contact our helpline on 0303 3033 100 for further information, advice and support.



# Raising awareness of aphasia

Find out more  
about getting  
involved in  
Make May Purple  
2017 on page  
**40**

During the summer, stroke survivors and their networks across the UK helped to raise awareness of the speech and language difficulties many people face after a stroke.

For *Aphasia Awareness Month* in June, Speakability groups and other supporters visited people working in customer facing organisations, including shops, banks and restaurants, to inform them about aphasia and the needs of customers affected by it.



Our Oxfordshire Communication Support Coordinator, Harriet Hammond, also helped to spread the word with her *Make May Purple* challenge: "My aim was to raise awareness of communication difficulties by completing daily

activities without using speech, to gain some experience of the challenges that someone with aphasia might face."

**I have had a stroke  
and find it difficult to  
speak, read or write**

Please give me time to communicate.  
Speak clearly, taking your time and write  
down key words. Your help and patience  
would be appreciated.

Stroke survivors can order this free, wallet-sized card to help people to understand their needs from [stroke.org.uk/communicationhelp](http://stroke.org.uk/communicationhelp)

Harriet's challenges included asking for a bus ticket using writing and gesture; ordering a coffee using a word book; and using a communication app on her phone to ask for help with finding items in a supermarket. "People are often in a rush so there is frequently a need to ask them to be patient with someone that needs help," said Harriet.




"I hope that through these challenges I will have made life a little easier for people with aphasia by helping shopkeepers to understand and be more aware of the condition, and how they can help."

**ASK . WAIT . LISTEN**

## Did you know?

The Royal College of Physicians have recently released their latest patient version of the National Clinical Guideline for Stroke.

This short 'easy read' version of the full guideline outlines:

-  What care should be provided after stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
-  When it should be provided
-  Why it is important.

It also provides information on stroke and TIA as well as where to obtain further help and support.

Visit [stroke.org.uk/guideline](http://stroke.org.uk/guideline) to view the patient version of the guideline online.

# Life After Stroke Awards 2016

The Life After Stroke Awards celebrate the incredible achievements of people affected by stroke, from determined stroke survivors, to committed carers, volunteers, stroke clubs and health professionals.

The winners were presented with their awards by stroke survivor Chris Tarrant OBE at a wonderful event held at The Dorchester, London on 16 November.

We're proud to introduce them below:



## **Fundraiser of the Year Award** **Nick Cann**

Nick Cann, former Chief Executive of the Institute of Financial Planning (IFP), was lecturing in Northampton when he collapsed. "I was rushed to hospital where I had a brain scan and received thrombolysis, which significantly helped my recovery," he said.

The stroke affected his right side and caused aphasia and dyspraxia. "I couldn't speak for weeks and had confusion with yes and no. When I returned home, I went to speech therapy classes weekly and my speech improved. It has been three years of dedication and determination but I feel I am improving every day and will continue to do so with the support of the Stroke Association and my friends and family."

After his stroke, Nick dedicated his time to raising money for the Stroke Association who helped him through his rehabilitation. He also set up a new venture in Monmouthshire called Project Phoenix, which aims to help people with aphasia and other stroke related disabilities, get their lives back.

This year, Nick raised £6,710 for the Stroke Association by participating in the Cardiff to Tenby bike ride. His family and friends have also completed the London to Paris bike ride; a 24 hour driving challenge in Europe; and organised events such as 'It's a knock-out', raising £57,000 for the Stroke Association and Project Phoenix.



## **Children and Young People's Courage Award** **Connor Lynes**

Connor was 14 when a rugby injury caused him to have two strokes. He fought back and now raises awareness of brain injury in sport through social media.



## **Adult Courage Award (18-64 years old)** **John Smejka**

Since his stroke, John has participated in numerous aphasia research projects, including EVA Park (page 32), campaigned for more stroke research funding at the All Party Pressure Group for Stroke, and supports stroke survivors in Lincolnshire.



### Adult Courage Award (65 years +)

#### Sean Crane

After his stroke, Sean committed himself to helping stroke survivors in his community. He and his family have organised a variety of stroke awareness events, including lighting up Hurst Castle lighthouse for *Make May Purple*.



### Award for Creative Arts

#### John Somerville

Professional sculptor John overcame limited mobility after his stroke to create inspiring works of art, including a life-size bronze of Spike Milligan. He also devotes his time to supporting and befriending other stroke survivors.



### Stroke Group Award Swale Stroke Group

The volunteer-led Swale Stroke Group is a great source of friendship and support to its 50 members, who are active, enthusiastic fundraisers, committed to raising awareness in their community.



### Carer's Award

#### Paul Massey

When his ex-wife Mary had a stroke, Paul immediately came to her aid. He supports Mary's recovery and has enabled her to make great progress. He also helps other stroke survivors and carers at their local stroke group.



### Award for Volunteering

#### Julie Monk

Julie had three strokes between 2000-2002. She has shown amazing courage by volunteering, helping others affected by stroke and setting up and chairing the 4ward Strokes support group in Leicester.



### Professional Excellence Award

#### Christine Brown

Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist for Stroke, Christine has dedicated her entire working life to supporting and encouraging stroke survivors in their recovery as well as inspiring the colleagues and students she works with.



Visit [stroke.org.uk/lasa](https://stroke.org.uk/lasa) to find out more about our wonderful winners or to nominate someone for the 2017 awards. You can also call 01527 903 927 to request a paper 2017 nomination form.

# Granted conversation and confidence

David O'Brien's life changed suddenly and completely after a major stroke in July 2014. However, with the help of our Life After Stroke Grant, he is making great progress with his recovery.

The 44 year old father from Liverpool experienced one-sided weakness, loss of eyesight and communication difficulties following his stroke. Supported locally by the Stroke Association, David worked hard to improve his mobility and speech, but being unable to talk to his wife and daughter took its toll on him emotionally, making him feel depressed and distanced from those around him.

At the recommendation of Karen Marie Jones, Stroke Association Communication Support Coordinator, David applied for our Life After Stroke Recovery Grant for a tablet computer, to use with a speech and language app to aid communication. These means-tested grants, funded by money raised by Royal Mail, are one-off payments of up to £300

for items which aid recovery or enable you to become active in your community.

Thousands of stroke survivors around the UK have now benefited from this crucial financial assistance, which has helped with the purchase of many items including mobility aids, specialist kitchen appliances and equipment to support hobbies.

"The iPad and App are helping me to have conversations with my wife and daughter for the first time in two years," said David.

"It has greatly improved my confidence, especially around people I don't know. I can't wait for the day when my wife tells me to be quiet again!"



**Would you benefit from a grant to help with communication or any of the challenges stroke brings?**

To learn more or apply for our Life After Stroke Grants, call our Stroke Helpline on **0303 3033 100**, visit **[stroke.org.uk/grants](http://stroke.org.uk/grants)** or email **[Grants.External@stroke.org.uk](mailto:Grants.External@stroke.org.uk)**.



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- Care Home Fees Recovery
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- Loss of Mental Capacity
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- Court of Protection
- Conveyancing
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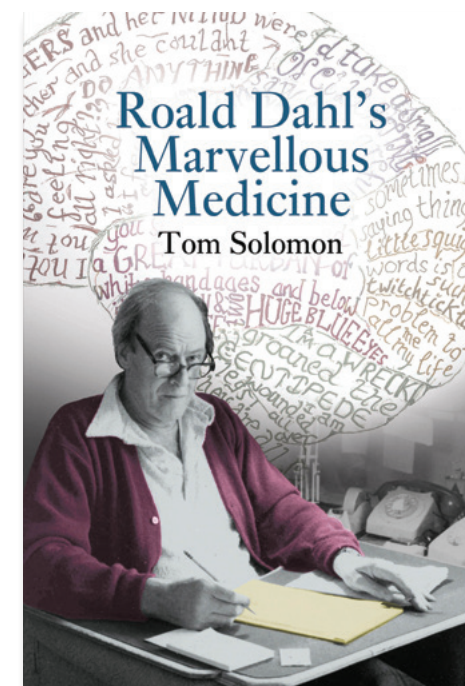
## Feature

# Roald Dahl

## and the Stroke Association

Most people know Roald Dahl as a famous writer of children's books and adult short stories, but few are aware of his fascination with medicine. Perhaps even more surprising is his role in creating the Stroke Association as we know it today, and that the unique language in the BFG is inspired by his experience of his wife, Patricia Neal's, aphasia.

The award-winning science communicator Professor Tom Solomon, who looked after the nation's favourite children's author towards the end of his life, examines Dahl's interest in everything medical in his new book, *Roald Dahl's Marvellous Medicine*. We're delighted to announce that all of the author



royalties will be donated to six charities working in areas that were of interest to Dahl, including the Stroke Association.

***Roald Dahl's Marvellous Medicine* is published by Liverpool University Press and is available to buy now, paperback RRP £10.**

# A New Era for Stroke:

## From petition to parliament

Thank you to everyone who signed and promoted our 'A New Era for Stroke' petition calling on the Government to commit to a new national stroke strategy for England.

Thanks to your hard work we collected over 50,000 signatures, through online and paper petitions, in less than four months. This has led to a parliamentary committee saying that the Government needs to give greater clarity to stroke survivors on how it will guarantee the standard of care they need.

The 20,000 paper petitions we received were presented to Nigel Evans MP by stroke survivor and Stroke Association Ambassador Karen Pritchard from East Hampshire (both pictured). Karen 'became a campaigner overnight' when she engaged and encouraged some of those who attended

one of her Stroke Ambassador talks to take supportive action. "From then on I was hooked," said Karen. "I could see my efforts on the campaign making a real difference. I was delighted to hand in everyone's paper petitions and it was exciting to be invited to the Houses of Parliament. Loss of memory is one of the biggest effects of my stroke – but I hope that I never forget this day."

On receiving the petitions, Nigel Evans MP said, "I was thrilled to be asked to submit the petition for the Stroke Association. Stroke is something that has personally affected my family and I know how devastating it can be. I look

**"I was delighted to hand in everyone's paper petitions and it was exciting to be invited to the Houses of Parliament."**

forward to continuing to champion the 'A New Era for Stroke' campaign."

Whether you got one signature or hundreds, you succeeded in reaching out and inspiring others to take action on stroke. We now hope that you consider yourself a campaigner and would love you to continue to take action with us in the future.

**To find out how you can support our campaigns and continue to improve the lives of people affected by stroke, join our Campaigns Network at [stroke.org.uk/campaigns-signup](http://stroke.org.uk/campaigns-signup).**





## But the work isn't over yet...

Handing in the petition is just the start. We now need the Government to see that there is support among MPs for the campaign.

To do this the Stroke Association went to the Labour and Conservative party conferences to speak to Members of Parliament, particularly those we'd not met before. We received a great response but need even more MPs to help us build a groundswell of parliamentary support.

You can help us to achieve this by contacting your MP. This will help to give stroke survivors a stronger voice in parliament and enable us to ensure we create 'A New Era for Stroke'.



Peter Dowd MP



Dave Anderson MP



Justin Madders MP



Diane Abbott MP



Jeremy Hunt MP

David Mowat MP

Help us drive forward 'A New Era for Stroke' in parliament by contacting your MP today at [stroke.org.uk/NewEraMP](http://stroke.org.uk/NewEraMP)



Photos © Gus Campbell Photography

# Planning your next holiday?

It's important that you're fully covered when you go abroad to avoid the risk of high medical costs. However, finding comprehensive travel insurance after you've had a stroke can be both frustrating and time consuming.

The Stroke Association is now working with AllClear Travel to offer stroke survivors, supporters, families and friends access to specialist travel insurance. The policies have no age limits and offer both single trip and annual multi-trip options.

"I am very happy with the service, will definitely use it again." – Janis

"Getting travel insurance with AllClear was great because they seem to care and offered a reasonable price." – George

### Getting a quote

If you need specialist travel insurance after having a stroke, just visit [stroke.org.uk/travel-insurance](http://stroke.org.uk/travel-insurance) or call **0808 168 8733**. When you purchase a policy from AllClear, they will make a contribution of up to 20% of your premium to the Stroke Association. For more details see [stroke.org.uk/travel-insurance](http://stroke.org.uk/travel-insurance).

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# Sex and relationships

Sex and relationships are an important part of many people's lives. The physical and emotional changes that stroke can cause may affect your intimate relationships. However, this can be a difficult topic to talk about.



**Doug Youngson from our Stroke Helpline answers some commonly asked questions.**



## Is sex safe if I've had a stroke?

This is something many people worry about, but you are no more likely to have a stroke during sex than at any other time. Sex, like other forms of physical activity, can raise your blood pressure. However, this is unlikely to be a problem except in rare cases. If you are concerned, check with your doctor. Medical professionals will be used to talking about sex and are there to help.



## How can stroke affect sex and relationships?

There are physical effects of stroke that can make sex more

difficult, including tiredness, pain and continence problems. These problems can usually be overcome (see our *Sex after stroke* factsheet for practical advice). Stroke can also cause changes in hormones, which may cause problems with sex. Talk your doctor if you are having problems.

Many people experience emotional changes after stroke, including feeling anxious, depressed or angry. You might also feel like your relationship with your partner has changed, especially if they are now your carer as well. These changes may affect your interest in sex.

It is important to talk to each other about how you are feeling. Some people find it helps to talk to a therapist. This is someone independent who can create a safe space for you to explore how you feel and find solutions.

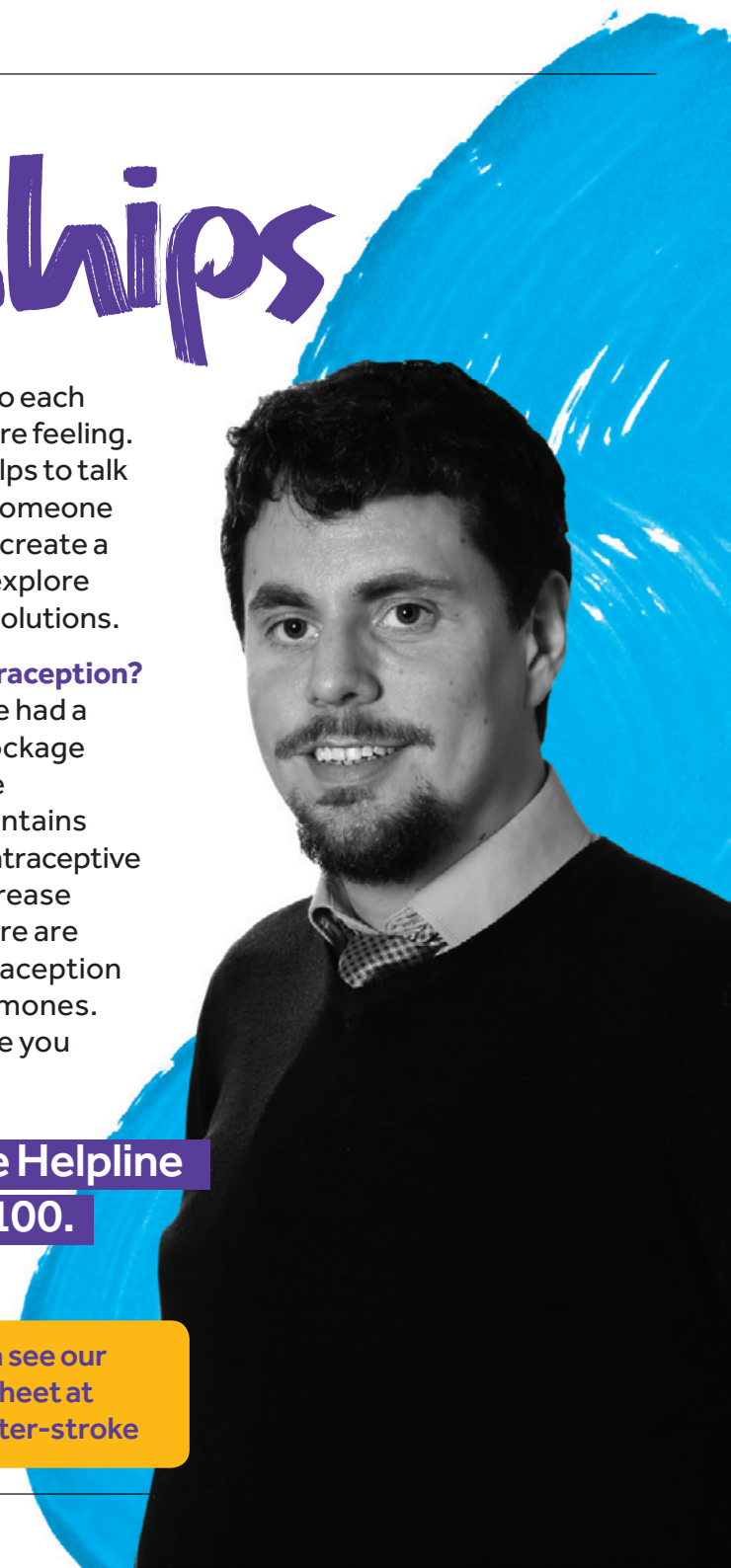


## What about contraception?

Women who have had a stroke caused by a blockage may not be able to use contraception that contains hormones (such as contraceptive pills) as these may increase the risk of stroke. There are several types of contraception that don't involve hormones. Your doctor can advise you on the options.

**Call our Stroke Helpline  
on 0303 3033 100.**

For more information see our ***Sex after stroke* factsheet** at [stroke.org.uk/sex-after-stroke](http://stroke.org.uk/sex-after-stroke)





# Running to recovery



In October 2012, grandfather of four, Arthur Threlfall-Searson had a stroke. He'd begun to feel unwell, and while his wife was seeking help, he collapsed, unable to move or speak. Three years later, 70 year old Arthur embarked on a running challenge for the Stroke Association.

"Running has been a vital part of my recovery," said Arthur. "After my stroke I could barely walk, I was very unsteady and needed a stick. With a lot of determination, I built up the distance of my walks, and then the pace. Taking on the run means that I can give something back to the Stroke Association, which has been there throughout my recovery."

Arthur completed his run, exceeded his fundraising goal and achieved a finishing time under his personal target.



If, like Arthur, you'd like to take part in a challenge for the Stroke Association then why not sign up for one of our UK-wide spring Resolution Runs? You can run, jog or walk the routes, and get friends and family involved. For more information and to sign up visit [stroke.org.uk/resolution](http://stroke.org.uk/resolution)

# Stay Well This Winter

Cold weather can be bad for our health. It affects the immune system, narrows arteries, and lowers blood temperature, increasing the risk of stroke.

However, winter doesn't have to go hand in hand with illness. Here are some top tips for staying well this winter.



**1 Keep warm** – heat your home to at least 18°C and wrap up warm outside.

**2 Eat well** – have at least one hot meal a day to keep your energy levels up and drink plenty of fluids.

**3 Get a flu jab** – flu can be serious and lead to hospitalisation, that's why you may be eligible for a free vaccination. Speak to your GP or pharmacist.

**4 Speak to your pharmacist** – ask about useful medicines to help you through winter and seek advice if you feel unwell, even if it is just a cough or cold.

**5 Ask the NHS** – If you need help when the GP surgery or pharmacy is closed, call **NHS 111** or visit **www.nhs.uk**

**Stay Well This Winter** is a joint initiative from NHS England and Public Health England. Visit [www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell) for more advice and information.

supporting

**STAY WELL  
THIS WINTER**

# Finding the words

Since his stroke in 2012, Andrew McCracken has been working hard to overcome aphasia. With the help of his speech and language therapy group (SLTG) he is building his confidence and finding alternative ways to communicate.

Andrew was 52 when he had a stroke. He'd been in hospital for a routine procedure when he became unwell. A quick-thinking doctor recognised the signs of a stroke and he swiftly received life-saving clot removal treatment.

"When Andrew came round he couldn't speak at all, there was just noise and a few small words," said his wife Amanda. It affected his ability to speak and made him reluctant to socialise with friends as it wasn't always easy for him to follow the conversation and explain what he wanted to say. "He'd get very frustrated that we didn't understand what he was trying to tell us. We'd eventually

get to what he wanted but it took a bit longer," recalled Amanda.

When Andrew was discharged from hospital, he was referred to the Stroke Association's SLTG in Belfast. Partly funded by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the group supports people affected by aphasia using a range of creative approaches to improve memory, enhance communication skills and build confidence. "Andrew is a regular at the group," said Speech and Language Therapist Catherine Lowry. "He has recently completed the SLT programme and is moving onto the next stage which will involve him participating in activities in the community and supporting other stroke survivors."



**"He'd get very frustrated that we didn't understand what he was trying to tell us."**



Andrew's group is part of a network of Stroke Association communication support services around the UK. "The support provided by the Stroke Association has helped Andrew to rebuild his confidence and feel less isolated," said Amanda.

Although he and his family are still adjusting to life after stroke, Andrew is positive about the future. His speech continues to improve and with the help of alternative communication methods such as drawing, gesture and finger spelling, he now finds it easier to communicate with friends and family.

He enjoys the camaraderie and "craic" at the group, safe in the knowledge that everyone there understands what it's like to live with aphasia and the effects of stroke.

**Find support services in your area via [stroke.org.uk/nowords](https://stroke.org.uk/nowords) or call our Stroke Helpline on 0303 3033 100.**

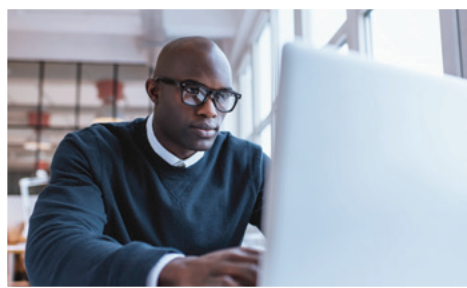


# Using virtual worlds to help people with aphasia

Aphasia can significantly affect people's lives. While symptoms can be improved with speech and language therapy, stroke survivors with long-term communication problems can feel cut off from the world.

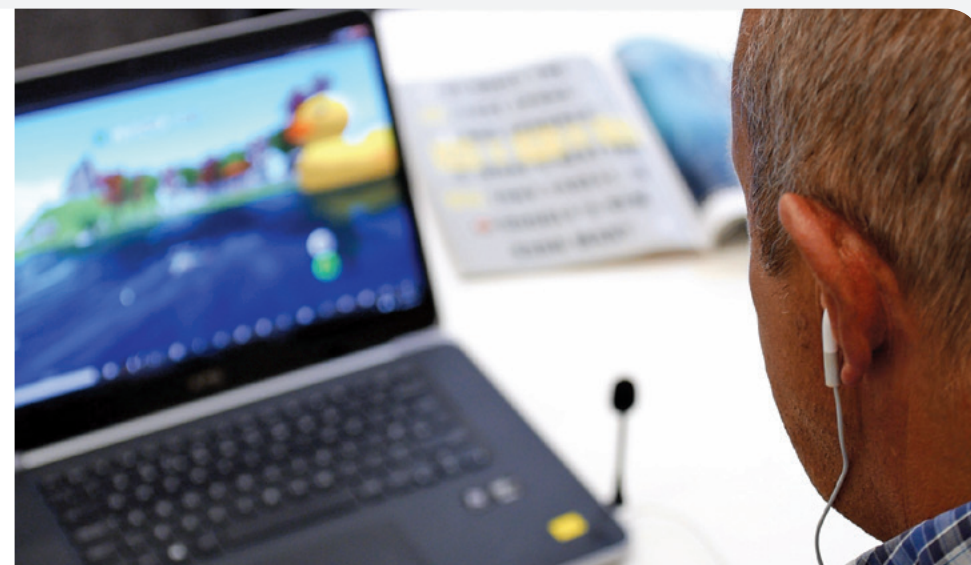
Virtual reality (or pretend) worlds on the internet have exciting potential for aphasia therapy. In 2012, the Stroke Association began funding a study to explore the possible benefits of a virtual reality programme for people with aphasia called EVA Park. Created by researchers at City University London, EVA Park is an online island made up of virtual locations including shops, restaurants and a bar. Users are represented by personalised characters or 'avatars' and interact using speech or text.

The programme aims to help people to practise their speech, establish social connections and to use virtual encounters to build their confidence for real life experiences.



Users can access EVA Park from their home computer. It is protected so that only people with aphasia and specially trained support workers can take part.

Researchers have been working with stroke survivors to evaluate EVA Park's impact on their development. Twenty people participated in the first study, which showed that using EVA Park led to a significant improvement in day to day communication.



We are now pleased to be funding the next stage of the project. Volunteers from existing stroke services will hold group sessions for 32 people with aphasia within EVA Park to see if it is effective in a group setting.

"We are keen for Eva Park to become a mainstream resource that is widely available to people with aphasia," said Professor Jane Marshall, who leads the EVA Park research team. "Our previous work showed that EVA can provide people with the opportunity to practise functional and social conversations, particularly on a one to one basis. This new project will test its capacity to deliver group support." It is hoped that virtual group support could be

used to assist stroke survivors who are unable to access face-to-face services.

Last year, EVA Park won the Tech4Good People's Award, highlighting how technology may be used to aid stroke recovery.



**You can support stroke research by giving what you can at [stroke.org.uk/donation](https://stroke.org.uk/donation) or by calling 0300 330 0740.**

# Money matters

Many people find that their financial situation changes after stroke. If you are disabled, you may find that things like household bills and getting around cost more.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a financial benefit for people aged between 16 and 64 who have a long-term illness or disability.

## How do I apply for PIP?

Call the PIP claim line on **0800 917 2222** or visit **[www.gov.uk/pip/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/pip/how-to-claim)**. Someone else can call on your behalf, but you will need to be there with them.

You will be asked to provide information about yourself, including you:

- ➔ National Insurance number
- ➔ Bank or building society details
- ➔ Doctor's or health worker's name
- ➔ Details of any time you've spent in a care home, in hospital or living abroad.

You will then be sent a form called 'How your condition affects you'. You can get advice on how to fill it in from Citizens Advice: **[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**. You usually need to go for a face-to-face assessment with a healthcare professional. You can take someone with you and get your travel costs reimbursed.

## What if I am turned down for PIP?

A decision will be sent to you by letter. If you don't agree with the decision, the first step is to talk to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Their details will be on the letter. If this does not resolve the issue, you can ask for



a 'mandatory reconsideration' within one month of the date of the letter. This is a formal review of your case. If you are unhappy with the result of the mandatory reconsideration you can appeal.

Your appeal will be put to an independent tribunal, consisting of a judge, a doctor and occasionally a DWP representative. You don't have to attend a tribunal hearing, but doing so gives you an opportunity to put your case



forward and your appeal is more likely to be successful. You can take someone with you for support. Citizens Advice has more information about attending an appeal hearing on their website.

The claims process and benefits rules can differ around the UK. If you need advice on your personal situation, call the Stroke Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or see our *Benefits and financial assistance factsheet* at **[stroke.org.uk/benefits](http://stroke.org.uk/benefits)**



# Puzzles

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

## Word search

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

APHASIA LISTEN  
AWARDS RUN  
CAMPAIGN SING  
HELP TOOLS  
INSPIRE WORDS

## Across

- 1 Be playfully amorous (5)  
7 Old Testament patriarch (7)  
8 Unplaced horse (4-3)  
9 Go off course (7)  
11 Sheepdog (6)  
13 London tailors' street (6,3)  
15 Mass movement (9)  
19 Regain (something lost) (6)  
21 International news agency (7)  
23 Small mat; ship (7)  
24 Greek restaurant (7)  
25 Make slightly angry (5)

## Lottery

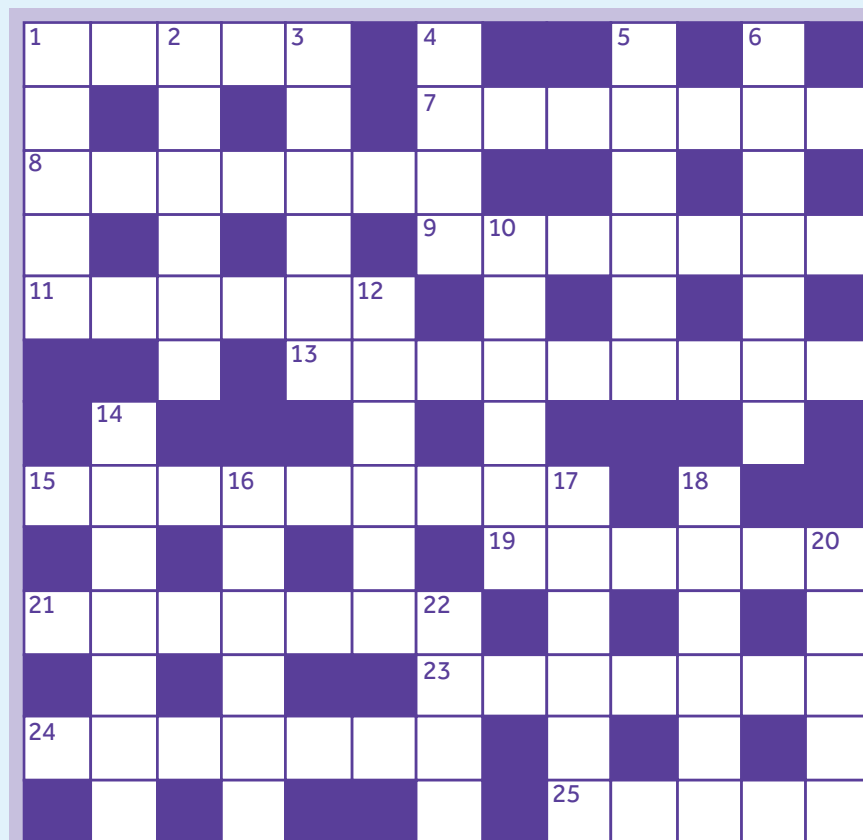
For your chance to win  
£25,000 every week, play the  
Stroke Association Charity  
Lottery. Find out more at  
[stroke.org.uk/lottery](http://stroke.org.uk/lottery)



**Solutions**  
See page  
40

## Down

- 1 Former French currency (5)  
2 Treat with disrespect (6)  
3 Doctor Who's ship (6)  
4 Granular substance (4)  
5 Narrow gorge (6)  
6 Humorous drawing (7)  
10 Newspaper head (6)  
12 Church festival (6)  
14 Emergency worker (7)  
16 On the contrary (8)  
17 State of western US (6)  
18 Make less firm (6)  
20 Drink made from pears (5)  
22 Dishonest scheme (4)



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

# Together we can conquer stroke

As a charity, we rely on your support to prevent stroke and change lives. A huge thank you to everyone who's gone the extra mile to fundraise, volunteer and campaign with us.

Our amazing supporters have been challenging themselves in a variety of ways. Team Over Confident and Under Trained powered through fire, ice, water and lots of mud at Total Warrior Scotland, raising over £1,000.



Thank you to 10 year old fundraiser and volunteer Joseph Cox, who held a bake sale and raffle at his house and raised over £420.



Meanwhile, Steven Turton and friends Mathew and Steve participated in a 2000 mile charity rally across Europe, raising more than £500.



Find out what events we've got coming up on page 40 or make a donation at [stroke.org.uk/donation](http://stroke.org.uk/donation)

How does your donation help?



**£5** could help 15 people begin to come to terms with stroke with crucial factsheets.

**£20** could support our Stroke Helpline to give life-changing advice to people struggling to cope.

**£50** could help us continue to invest in research which prevents stroke and improves the lives of stroke survivors.



Thousands of you participated in our autumn Resolution Runs, as well as walking events and marathons all over the UK. Venetia and Natashya Rogers (pictured), ran the River Ness 10k and raised £500. Find your local 5, 10 or 15km at [stroke.org.uk/resolution](http://stroke.org.uk/resolution).

## Volunteer spotlight

Ruth began volunteering two years ago with the Merseyside Life After Stroke group.

This was a difficult period in Ruth's life. She had given up a place on a nursing degree as she didn't feel she was ready. Achieving her dream of being a nurse seemed far away.

Two years later Ruth is a valued part of the group and was recently nominated for a Life After Stroke Award. Ruth has also successfully gone back to university to complete her nursing degree.

Ruth puts this new found confidence and self-belief down to her volunteering.



To find out more about the volunteering opportunities that are available visit [stroke.org.uk/volunteer](http://stroke.org.uk/volunteer).



# Dates for your diary

## Last chance to order Christmas cards December 2016

Order your Stroke Association cards, including stroke survivor Ken Tooby's design at

**stroke.org.uk/Christmas** or call **01233 214 320**.



## 2017 Christmas card competition deadline 27 January 2017

Do you have a creative side? Send in your entries to **cardcompetition@stroke.org.uk** or call **01604 687 771**.

## Bookings open for UK Stroke Assembly events January 2017

Book your tickets to our 2017 UK Stroke Assembly events for those affected by stroke and aphasia. Visit **stroke.org.uk/UKSA** or call **01527 903 917** for details or email **info@strokeassembly.org.uk** to join the mailing list.

## FAST campaign returns February 2017

Would you recognise the signs of stroke? Look out for our FAST campaign to raise awareness of stroke symptoms. For further details visit **stroke.org.uk/FAST**.

## ➔ Make May Purple, May 2017

Join in the fun and Make May Purple for stroke. Sign up for our Purple Action Pack at **stroke.org.uk/makemaypurple**.

For more events and ways to get involved in our work, see **stroke.org.uk**

### Crossword

**Across:** 1 FLIRT, 7 ABRAHAM, 8 ALSO-RAN, 9 DEVIATE, 11 COLLIE, 13 SAVILE ROW, 15 MIGRATION, 19 RECOUP, 21 REUTERS, 23 COASTER, 24 TAVERNA, 25 ANNOY

**Down:** 1 FRANC, 2 INSULT, 3 TARDIS, 4 SAND, 5 RAVINE, 6 CARTOON, 10 EDITOR, 12 EASTER, 14 FIREMAN, 16 RATHER, 17 NEVADA, 18 SOFTEN, 20 PERRY, 22 SCAM

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