

Club Together

Issue 51: Autumn 2018

Central

Celebrating stroke clubs and groups



More than 150 representatives from 71 clubs and groups came together in September for the annual **UK Stroke Club Conference** at the East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham.

The event was opened by Beth Scrimshaw, UK Volunteering and Community Partnerships Manager, and celebrated the fantastic work of volunteers and group members in providing support to people affected by stroke.

Stroke clubs and groups really are

the heart of the stroke community and this was demonstrated by **Emma Day** and **Paul Thompson** from **Neath Port Talbot Stroke Group**. Emma and Paul spoke about the power and value of their group.

With little support available in her area, Emma found the courage after her stroke to set up the Neath Port Talbot Group, which changed not only her life, but those of others affected by stroke in South Wales.

Read on for more from this year's conference.

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Together we can conquer stroke

Stroke
association

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On day two, workshops included sessions on wellbeing, how to run a successful group, fundraising and connecting with carers. We heard about **My Stroke Guide** and plans for the resource to grow and support more stroke survivors in their recovery through online information, videos and support forums.

A dedicated area for practical activities, including seated curling, music and crafts, ran all day on Saturday. The activities gave people the chance to gain new skills, inspiration and ideas to take back to their groups.

Familiar faces and many new representatives shared experiences, tips and powerful stories over the two-day event. The conference was also a chance to network and gain inspiration while making new friends.

Visit stroke.org.uk/ukscc for photos, presentations and information from the event. Why not share these with your group and inspire others at your next meeting?

Are you interested in helping shape next year's **UK Stroke Club Conference**? If so, please phone or text Beth on **07703 319 426** or email her at beth.scrimshaw@stroke.org.uk.



The Stroke Club Exchange at UKSCC



Sharing ideas and learning from each other is the true essence of the **UK Stroke Club Conference**.

This is brought to life through the **Stroke Club Exchange**. The displays are visually engaging and put together by clubs and groups.

They showcase the variety of activities, art and crafts, days out and fundraising that you all work so hard to arrange in your local communities.

This year's Exchange was the most varied yet, with displays including darts demonstrations, pottery, newsletters, photos, prevention work and tips on keeping healthy and active.

Di Daniels and **Steve Park** represented the **Maldon and Dengie Stroke Group**, who were recognised for the most inspirational display, which showed how they support their members through imaginative activities, camaraderie and fun.



Inspired ideas

Making Christmas decorations is a fun activity where you can embrace your creative side and make your club or group's Christmas celebrations a little more personal.

The decorations don't have to be Christmas themed - you could paint a host of memories on to your decorations. Is there something that you've achieved that you're really proud of? Or is there a trip that you particularly enjoyed? Build up a collection of memories that your group can cherish. It's entirely up to you what you create!

To make the decorations, you will need:

- Table covers
- Newspaper or scrap paper torn into strips
- PVA glue
- Paintbrushes
- Paints
- Objects to mould – small balloons or ramekins.

Method:

1. Cover the tables so they are protected from paint and glue.
2. Mix up the PVA glue with some water so it's a runny consistency.
3. Blow up a balloon to the size required. If you're using a ramekin, lightly coat it in a cooking oil or petroleum jelly first and place it face down on to your table. This will provide a better base for anyone who only uses one hand.
4. Cover both sides of your paper with glue using the paintbrush.
5. Place your strips on to your mould one at a time and smooth to remove air bubbles. Build up your layers until it's fully covered and you're happy with the thickness of your decoration.
6. Depending on your decoration's theme, you could add further embellishments made out of cardboard such as handles or decorations like holly.
7. When it's completely dry, remove it from the ramekin or pop the balloon. Paint the decoration with two coats of thick paint to seal it. This will give you a clean base to start with.
8. Now, it's time to decorate!

Reflecting on 2018



Hello! I'm Beth, your UK Volunteering and Community Partnerships Manager at the Stroke Association.

Since joining our charity in May, I've had the honour of meeting many of you who run vital support groups across the UK. By bringing people affected by stroke together, you deliver life-changing work in your communities.

We know that when we connect with people who have been through a similar situation, we feel less alone, more confident and happy. It's thanks to your hard work, time, dedication and passion that this crucial network continues to exist and thrive.

As it's nearing the end of the year, I wanted to share some key highlights from over the last twelve months.

- We welcomed new local staff, who focus specifically on supporting our network of clubs and groups.

- Over 600 Stroke Association Voluntary Group members told us why stroke support groups are so important, including making new friendships, being more active and feeling less isolated.
- Our Big Lottery Funded programme, Hand in Hand, continues to reach more people affected by stroke. 20 new groups were established across the country, which brings us to 56 new groups in total since the programme began in 2016.
- We worked more closely with diverse communities to understand their needs in relation to stroke and prevention.
- And, as you've just read, we hosted an incredible UK Stroke Club Conference which brought together 151 expert representatives from across 71 clubs and groups.

Please get in touch with me on **07703 319 426** or **beth.scrimshaw@stroke.org.uk** to tell me how things are going for your club or group. I want to know what we can do better when working together.

It's wonderful to reflect on how far we've come in developing this fantastic community of clubs and groups that provide such amazing support to people affected by stroke. I look forward to more wonderful successes in 2019.

Beth Scrimshaw



I am more than my stroke



Dr. Finn Farquharson had a stroke in July 2017 at the age of 44. It happened when he was at work at the Manchester Royal Infirmary.

While he'd been exercising that morning, he'd torn an artery in his neck. The tear caused a clot to form, which dislodged and went to his brain, causing his stroke. The only warning Finn got was blurry vision in his left eye.

Finn received a thrombectomy to remove the clot within several hours. While he regained the ability to use his right arm and leg fairly quickly, the stroke left Finn with severe aphasia.

We introduced Finn to a **communication group**. Through his group, he has learned how others manage their recovery. He has also had the opportunity to practise his communication skills, which has been so valuable.

He also finds our **communication card** very useful. This resource helps him to feel more confident when approaching new people. You can get the communication card by visiting stroke.org.uk/shop and searching for 'communications card'.

"I was so scared, but I feel lucky to be here," he says. **"I am focused and determined. I find opportunities to practise my speech wherever I can."**

This festive season, Finn and his family are hoping for a true family Christmas, and especially looking forward to Finn making his famous Christmas ham once more. To find out more about our new Christmas campaign and how you can get involved, visit stroke.org.uk.

Our Christmas card competition is open

Each year we host a competition for stroke survivors to give you the opportunity to see your artwork made into a limited edition Christmas card. These are sold to raise vital funds for stroke survivors across the UK.

The winning design will be professionally printed and included in our 2019 Christmas card selection. Shortlisted designs are used for our corporate e-card designs.

2018 competition winner **Steven Ferrari's** design, (pictured), is now available to buy in our Christmas shop at stroke.org.uk or by calling **01233 214320**.



If you, or a stroke survivor you know, has a passion for painting, sketching, drawing or any other art form, we would love to hear from you. You never know, next year you may be sending your friends your winning design!

To enter, please send your original artwork and some information about yourself and your design to us by **Tuesday 29 January 2019**.

Post it to:
Christmas Card Competition 2019
Stroke Association
1 Sterling Business Park
Salthouse Road
Brackmills
Northampton
NN4 7EX

Email it to:
cardcompetition@stroke.org.uk

If you would like more information please visit stroke.org.uk/cardcomp19.



We're really pleased to share the story of our Stroke Group Award winners from this year's Life After Stroke Awards, the **North West Stroke Community Choir**.

In 2014, **Joyce Booth**, a Support Coordinator based in Tameside, was working with **Anne Williams** who had been a singer songwriter. Anne was experiencing low moods so Joyce referred her to art therapy and communication groups, but they weren't helping Anne.

Joyce was inspired when she met another coordinator at the local hospital who was a member of a choir. She decided to apply for a development grant to see if they could set one up. They were only expecting to run it for six weeks – they're still going strong four years on.

Joyce thinks that a key element of their success is that the group were encouraged not only to sing but also to perform in public, and that really helps focus and build their confidence. They are always working towards their next gig and trying new things to keep their repertoire fresh.

"We sing acapella, and we sing everything," says Joyce. **"We do songs that Anne wrote before her stroke - she's still a fundamental part of the group and her daughter now sings with us too."**

The choir performed at the Salford Royal Hospital and while there, someone suggested that they apply for funding so that they could continue to perform. They received the funding which meant they were able to hire practise venues and employ a Carol Donaldson as their musical director.

"Carol's been at the heart of getting us to where we are, right from the beginning," says Joyce. **"We sing in competitions against other choirs that don't have any disabilities. Often people don't realise that we are different and that's because Carol understands how to work with stroke survivors so well and get the best out of us. She keeps us all motivated and she makes it really special and fun."**

The group is in high demand and receive invitations to perform gigs all over the country - so many that they sometimes have to turn things down. The group has about 30 regular singers and they still get new members too, three people joined in the last couple of weeks.

"We like to have fun, in fact we have a ball. It's always the same, you get to the end of the day and you wonder if you have the energy to rehearse, but you go and you leave feeling like you are on cloud nine."

Heart of Birmingham launch FAST

Heart of Birmingham Stroke Support Group teamed up with Public Health England West Midlands to launch the Act FAST campaign earlier this year.

Members of the group shared their stories of stroke to help raise awareness and spread the FAST message. Leona, who runs the group, was also described as a local hero.

Thanks to all those who got involved, and shared your stories and amazing work.

PHE West Midlands @PHE_WestMids · Mar 15
 As part of our #ActFast campaign, we've teamed up with **Heart of Birmingham Stroke Support Group** @13_leona in the #WestMidlands to share their #stroke survivor stories and encourage people to dial 999 if they recognise signs of a stroke bit.ly/2HzLIFQ



PHE East of England liked
PHE West Midlands @PHE_WestMids · Mar 20
 Laughter is a great medicine: Friends Valeria Williams & Deana Walters (pictured right), met at **Heart of Birmingham Stroke Support Group** @WestMidlands which helps to combat the loneliness people may feel after a stroke. @13_leona @StrokeAssocWM. #ActFast bit.ly/2HzLIFQ



Celebration of a century



Lowestoft Stroke Support Group held a party to celebrate a member's 100th birthday in July. Here is Peggy, a regular attendee, cutting her cake.

Group supports members and premature babies

The **Active Stroke Survivors Group** hold regular creative sessions where members support each other with knitting and sewing projects.



They create:

- tiny baby quilts
- quilted covers and blankets for incubators
- baby bonnets and booties
- bonding squares.

All of the items are easy to knit and require very little experience. The group donate them to local special baby care units - mainly to Worcester Acute and to City Hospital Birmingham.

One of the most valuable items they make are the bonding squares. These little knitted squares are used on the special baby care unit to assist with the bonding process between mother and baby.

The mother is given a set of squares. . She wears one and the other is put into the incubator with the baby. Each day, the squares are swapped. This helps to familiarise the baby with the smell of their mother while they're in the incubator. When the mum can hold her baby, the baby can recognise her scent, which helps the bonding process between them.



Celebrating 500 hours of volunteering



Our amazing volunteer, **Dennis Hill**, completed over 500 hours of volunteering for the Stroke Association this year.

Dennis has been an integral part of our charity over the years. Not only is he chair of the **North East Worcestershire Stroke Group** but is also a Stroke Ambassador and a staunch supporter of the Stroke Association and the work we do.

He delivers moving, funny, motivational speeches to audiences across the region. In addition to this, Dennis does blood pressure checks, community events and gets his family firmly involved in fundraising events.

Volunteers are an invaluable part of our organisation and in delivering the work we do. Well done Dennis, you are inspirational and we look forward to the next 500 hours!

A fantastic summer holiday for Chiltern

On 25 September members of the **Chiltern Stroke Club** travelled to Weston-super-Mare in a wheelchair accessible coach on their annual holiday.

Four gloriously sunny days were spent in a hotel on the seafront. All enjoyed an outing on the steam railway to Minehead, a visit to the ancient Bishop's Palace in Wells and a delicious cream tea on the pier at Weston.

The group held a Somerset themed fun quiz one evening and three teams competed furiously in an effort to win the box of chocolates! A lovely break away for our stroke survivors and their carers.



Fun at the fete

The Stroke Association Voluntary Group in Beccles donned their hats and had fun with their 'human fruit machine' stall at their local Rotary Club Hospital Fete in June.

All proceeds from the day were added together and shared equally between the participating charities.



Hertford and Ware celebrate royal wedding

Hertford and Ware Stroke Club celebrated the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle in true patriotic colours and style. They held a party in a hall festooned with bunting, offered an abundance of food and members came dressed in their finest outfits. All had a great afternoon!

The party-goers were also delighted to hear a first-hand account from a relative of one of their volunteers who had witnessed Prince Harry and Meghan's special day. She talked about the experience and showed videos and photos of the happy couple. She also received a lovely goody bag emblazoned with the royal wedding insignia, including a giant chocolate coin, handbag size shortbread, fridge magnet, and 20% off voucher for the Windsor Castle shop. The chair of the group said "it was absolutely fascinating".

After the talk, everyone enjoyed a spread of sausage rolls, cupcakes with edible photos of the royal couple on and, to top it all off, a lemon and elderflower wedding cake that had a miniature Harry and Meghan on top!



Delightful afternoon for Sandhurst Club

Sandhurst Stroke and Disabled Club enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea at Riseley Village Hall. It was their first outing in their Autumn programme and it was greatly enjoyed by the 20 members, volunteers and carers who attended. It was a very sociable, chatty and enjoyable afternoon.



A Flower of the Forest

At the **Buckingham and District Group's** September meeting, they enjoyed the reading of the book 'A Flower of the Forest', written by Jean Keston, a stroke survivor and group member. The fictionalised novel is based on the true story of Jean's uncle, Reg Dunn, who was killed in Dunkirk in 1940.



Jean is now working on a new book, depicting her experience as a stroke survivor, proving to us all that there is life after stroke. Well done, Jean!

Club's communal triathlon

Nottingham Stroke Club did their bit to raise funds for our charity during **Make May Purple** by holding a communal triathlon.



Any able and willing members contributed by walking, cycling and/or swimming. Members embraced the project wholeheartedly, had great fun and showed real determination. The group raised a fantastic **£1,094.20**. Congratulations to you all!

All aboard in Wokingham

The **Wokingham Stroke Support and Recovery Group** visited the Watercress Mid Hants Railway in New Alresford, Hampshire earlier this year:

Our party of 24 members and carers boarded a Pewsey Vale Coach capable of taking five wheelchairs, and made our way to Alresford. When we arrived, we relaxed with a drink in the converted old waiting rooms, which are still lit by gaslights. Others explored the platform and admired several of the steam trains.

At midday, we boarded a steam train with a specially adapted carriage for wheelchairs. For the next two hours, we enjoyed travelling between Aylesford and Alton enjoying a lunch, tea and coffee. We were well looked after by the lovely volunteers of the Watercress Line.

The trip was especially successful as it gave members and their families a chance to chat and catch up, and the transport took all the strain of the day away as we only had to walk or push wheelchairs short distances. We highly recommend this trip to other stroke clubs and groups.



Reading Stroke Support Group's summer outing



The **Reading Stroke Support Group** took a trip to the seaside thanks to a generous donation.

Group members, family and friends went to Eastbourne on Thursday 2 August after receiving £1,300 from jewellers, Beaverbrooks.

James Taylor, one of our wonderful volunteers who helped organise the trip said:

"Days like these allow group members with limited mobility to go out and enjoy themselves. It is a real luxury and we all had a great time."

A shout-out to Cirencester Stroke Club

Cirencester Stroke Club celebrated its 30th birthday this year. In recognition of this, the club presented our charity with a cheque for £100.

At the occasion, the club said farewell to **Margaret Knapp**, who is standing down after an incredible 30 years of volunteering.

Thank you, Margaret, for all you have done with love and devotion.

Welcome to the team

Join us in welcoming two new additions to the Central Zone Volunteering and Community Team.

Volunteering and Community Manager

Hi everyone! I'm Tina Hughes. I am the new Volunteering and Community Manager for the Central Zone. I've been with our charity for four years and have experience supporting clubs and groups, both regionally in the West Midlands and through the national team.



I'm very excited to join the team to support and develop your groups. I look forward to working with you all! Feel free to call me on **07342 049995** or drop me an email at **tina.hughes2@stroke.org.uk**.

Volunteering and Community Officer

Hi, I'm Jo Weston, your Volunteering and Community Officer for Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. For the last decade, I supported disabled and disadvantaged people, helping them prepare for, secure and sustain suitable employment. Voluntary work was a vital element of the process and I am excited to be working for an organisation where volunteers are such an integral part. I'm really looking forward to meeting you all, and seeing the amazing work that you do. I want to hear your hopes, dreams and aspirations so I can help you realise them. Please don't hesitate to get in touch on **07392 080003** or at **jo.weston@stroke.org.uk**.



Fundraising in partnership

We would love to hear from clubs and group who would like to fundraise in partnership with us. We can offer advice, help and support with your fundraising activity, as well as materials. A percentage of the funds raised go to your club or group, and a percentage helps us continue our work with those affected by stroke. Get in touch with your local contact to find out more.

Christmas appeal

This Christmas, we've designed a new poster for our appeal. People can donate to our charity and write a festive message on the poster, in lieu of sending Christmas cards to a large group of people.

Get in touch if you'd like a poster for your club or group, or if you know anyone who can put a poster up at work or school and help raise funds for us, and save paper too!

Fundraising successes

Wye Valley Runners in Herefordshire raised **£1,400** for us through their Gords 6 annual running event held in July, in memory of one of the club's founders, Mr Gordon Clements. They chose to support our charity this year as it's a cause close to the hearts of the event organisers.

The Cambridge Stroke Group came out on top recently in the Cash for the Community initiative run by The Cambridge Building Society in conjunction with the Cambridge News. Supporters of the group collected a huge number of tokens (more than any other charity involved) resulting in the group receiving **£1,584**. Congratulations to the group, who hope to use the funds to subsidise transport for group members and expand their programme of activities.



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If you have a story you'd like
to share in the next issue of
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Calendar

Dates for your diary...

Sunday 20 January

Life After Stroke Awards
Birmingham

Monday 18 February

Life After Stroke Awards
Nottingham

Sunday 24 February

Resolution Run
Arrow Valley Country Park,
Redditch

Sunday 3 March

Resolution Run
Coombe Country Park, Coventry

Sunday 10 March

Resolution Run
Braunstone Park, Leicester

Resolution Run
Nene Park Trust, Peterborough

Sunday 17 March

Resolution Run
Rushcliffe Country Park,
Nottingham

Sunday 24 March

Resolution Run
Temple Newsam, Leeds

Resolution Run
Catton Park, Norwich