

# Club Together

Issue 47: Spring/Summer 2017

East of England

## Make May Purple

Join the thousands of people going **purple this May** to **Change the Story** for those who have been **affected by stroke**.

By supporting **Make May Purple**, you can help us to make sure stroke gets the **attention it deserves**, and **fund vital, innovative research** into **stroke care and treatment**.



Our **clubs and groups** raise **much needed awareness of stroke**, year on year, and we can't **thank you** enough.

We'd like to show everyone the **support you give to us**, to **celebrate all that you do** and **share moments** that demonstrate what **Make May Purple** is all about.

And, after the success of our **photography competition** last year, we're running it again!

We'll be putting all of your photos

on our intranet for your club or group members to see. Then **Baroness Floella Benjamin** will judge the entries and pick a winner!

All we're asking is that you turn your upcoming events, plans and activities **purple!** From hosting a **purple dress-up day**, to creating **purple snacks** or holding a **purple-themed quiz**, whatever you're doing this May, make it **purple for stroke**.

Our photo competition is open for all **Stroke Association Voluntary Groups** and **Independent Stroke Clubs**, and we'd love to see your entries.

Get involved with **Make May Purple** and help to **change the story for stroke survivors**.

For more information, visit [intranet.stroke.org.uk](http://intranet.stroke.org.uk)



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Together we can conquer stroke

**Stroke**  
association

# UK Stroke Club Conference 2017



Put the date in your diary for this year's conference, taking place **Friday 29 - Saturday 30 September**, at the **East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham**.

The UKSCC is an annual event that **brings together** those involved in **running and volunteering at stroke clubs and groups** across the UK, where delegates can **network** with like-minded people and hear the **latest news** from the stroke community.

In 2016, over **150 representatives from 82 stroke clubs and groups** attended the inspiring event,

**sharing experiences and ideas**, finding out more about support available for their groups and their members.

**Further information and booking forms will be posted to the main contact of all clubs and groups in June.** Space is limited so book early.

Here are a few comments from people who have attended the UKSCC in 2016:

**"I learnt lots of new information about being a possible peer, and how I can help to support members of my group effectively."**

**"You can get so much from attending the conference; you make new friends and learn so much that you possibly didn't know before."**

**"It's a warm and welcoming friendly event, with lots of good ideas."**

**"It is great for meeting other groups and seeing what they're doing."**

Find out more about our event at: **[stroke.org.uk/UKSCC](http://stroke.org.uk/UKSCC)**

## Could an Essential Aid help with your recovery?

We've partnered with **Essential Aids** ([essentialaids.com](http://essentialaids.com)), a retail website that offers a huge range of rehabilitation items that can aid you while you're in recovery and help you adapt to life after stroke.

Their products cover all aspects of **day-to-day living**, ranging from bathing and dressing, food preparation and dining, to work and leisure activities. Some popular items include a multi-functional rolling walker with a seat and basket, to enable you to walk, carry shop and rest.



They also sell a selection of adapted kitchen and eating aids, many designed for use with one hand, like the ingenious Knork, a combination knife and fork (pictured). Essential Aids also have a wide variety of shower stools and grab rails, which can help to provide stability and security while you're bathing.

For more ideas, go to **[stroke.org.uk/daily-living-aids](http://stroke.org.uk/daily-living-aids)**, visit **[essentialaids.com](http://essentialaids.com)** or phone Essential Aids on **01273 719 889**. If you're a stroke survivor, or buying on their behalf please **tick the box** at the checkout and **Essential Aids will donate 5% of the item price to us**.

## Inspired ideas

You might think that writing is a solitary activity, but it can be something that the whole of your club or group can do together.

Writing is a really good way to get your feelings out, to confront issues you may not want to talk about directly, or to share experiences with your group in a new way.

Here are a few exercises that your club or group could do together:

### Write a short story

Start off by developing the main characters first, then your plot for the short story. Each group member could then write the story from a different character's point-of-view, only writing a couple of paragraphs. If you're a large group, split into teams and take on one character together. You could use this as a way to confront something that's on your mind, or to be as creative as possible! Read out your collaborative story one team, or person, after another. See where the story takes you!

### Describe a scene

You could reflect on your stroke journey, and visualise where you are, where you've come from, and perhaps, where you're heading. You could focus on something from your daily life, your past, or something you've imagined. Make sure to use the senses in your description of the scene - using sight, sound, touch, smell and taste will make it easier for others to imagine what you're describing.

### Choose a category

This is a great way to talk about things that are on people's minds without having to directly talk about them. Put category suggestions into a hat and pass it around, choosing a category as you go - it could be a question, or a thought. Write a 'flash fiction' paragraph of 50 words - you'll get some very interesting stories this way and some different points of view. Do this for as many categories as you'd like.

## "I have lost my words, not my intellect"



June is **Aphasia Awareness Month**. We need your help to **share stories of communication difficulties**, and to show everyone how to **support people affected by aphasia**.

We're sending **Aphasia International Association (AIA)** postcards to our **Speakability groups** to distribute across the UK, as part of a worldwide **month of action**.

All of our **clubs and groups** can support Aphasia Awareness Month by **sharing postcards**, and by **using social media** to share your stories of **living with aphasia**.

We'll be sharing stories of people like **John Smejka**, who said, **"I couldn't speak or write after my stroke, but I was desperate to get my voice back."**

Thanks to **stroke research**, John is now **relearning the speech he needs** to enjoy life - from ordering a family meal out to volunteering with other stroke survivors. We want to **raise funds for research** that can **change the story** for people like John, who are affected by stroke.

Share your stories on **Facebook, Twitter** and **Instagram** using the hashtags **#Aphasia** and **#ChangetheStory**.

Order your AIA postcards from **stroke.org.uk/aphasia** or call **01604 231000** and help us to **raise awareness of aphasia** this June.

# Volunteer survey shows positive results for clubs and groups volunteers

In January, we sent a survey to our volunteers across the UK, including Stroke Association Voluntary Group volunteers. We do this survey to **inform our work**, and to gain a **better understanding** of the 3,500 volunteers who support us.

We wanted to share **some insight we gained and the responses** we had from **volunteers who support clubs and groups**:

**The overall volunteer satisfaction rate was 80%, while the SAVG satisfaction rate was a little higher, at 82%.**

**When asked what the best thing about volunteering for the Stroke Association was, nearly 58% said it was helping, supporting, or seeing improvement in stroke survivors.**

**A further 26% said it was meeting people, making new friends, giving them a sense of purpose or independence.**

**90% felt that their volunteering role(s) have had an impact on the wellbeing of stroke survivors and carers.**



There were some very **touching and positive comments** made that we're keen to share:

**"It gives me great pleasure to see people who I take to the group meetings get real enjoyment, and start to communicate again, because meeting people is a vital part of the recovery. Out of the darkness, light begins to emerge."**

**"My personal impression is that I do somehow seem to make a difference. A survivor recently said "I feel safe when you're here" which made me feel proud."**

**"I have had a stroke myself and have been given a second chance, I need to help those survivors all I can. There is life after stroke."**

## Christmas comes early this year

We're pleased to offer your stroke club or group an opportunity to **buy and sell Stroke Association Christmas cards and stocking fillers** again, in order to help you raise money for your group.

You can buy all items from our Christmas catalogue at a **15% discount**, to **resell at retail price**, with the **funds generated going directly to your stroke club or group**.

Last year, you gave us feedback to let us know that not all of our groups had **enough time to get their orders in**, so we wanted to get the word out a little

earlier this year. Please note that only the **stroke club or group order form will be subject to a 15% discount on items**, and each club or group can order a **maximum of 200 items**.

Your group can order these items up until **1 December 2017**. By ordering these at a discounted rate, you're **agreeing to sell them at the original retail price**.

To request your order form or for more information, please call **0207 566 1540**.

# Get involved in your community by taking on a challenge or two - or three!

Our **Community Challenges** were introduced to encourage your group to work towards making your community **stroke friendly**, and to **increase fundraising, stroke awareness and local support** for those affected by stroke in your area. The year ahead is filled with events and opportunities, the perfect time to think about what challenge **your group** could undertake.

There are **three community challenges** that your group could complete to help make your community stroke friendly, and you can complete just one, two or all three.

The community challenges are:



## Prevention

To increase local people's understanding of how strokes occur and how they can be prevented



## Working Together

To engage with other groups and organisations in your area to increase awareness and support for stroke in the community



## Fundraising

To provide volunteer opportunities for local people and increase the financial sustainability of your group

Each challenge has **three themes** to consider and implement. These are to **take action**, **engage with local people** and **spread the word** to ensure that your group is as involved with your community as possible.

Recognition of your challenge will be awarded to **registered groups** that complete one or more challenges, and these include **certificates**, **wristbands** and **pin badges** to wear with pride.

## Community Challenge

Sign up for a challenge today



We have plenty of events that you can link a Community Challenge to, such as Take a Moment, Know Your Blood Pressure, Resolution Runs, Make May Purple, Step Out and Give a Hand.

We have produced our **Let's Take Action** resource for your group to use as a guide, and all groups who register to take on a Community Challenge will be offered support from us throughout your challenge.

Let us know if you'd like to sign up to a Community Challenge by emailing [clubtogether@stroke.org.uk](mailto:clubtogether@stroke.org.uk).

If you have any questions, please call **0207 566 1540**.



# Thurrock Art Group celebrates success!



**Chris Hamilton**, Coordinator in West Essex, runs the weekly **Thurrock Art Group**, where group member, **Alice James**,

(pictured above in her artist's hat), has recently been shortlisted for the Stroke Association's **corporate Christmas card** competition.

The winner of the competition is yet to be announced: we're really hoping that Alice wins, but being shortlisted is already a great achievement. **Well done, Alice!**

During January and February, artwork produced by the group was exhibited in libraries throughout Thurrock.

The exhibitions were really successful and the group is looking forward to holding further exhibitions later in the year.

With the help of their talented art tutor Sylvie, the group has produced some wonderful paintings.



**Sylvie** has made the class what it is today, and her guidance, patience, **understanding of disability**, and of course, her talent, have helped the group to succeed and shine.

The group is also very grateful for the **wonderful help** of our **volunteers, John and Graham**; thank you for your hard work!

## Groups from Norfolk and Suffolk connect

On 13 March, representatives from groups across **Norfolk** and **Suffolk** gathered to discuss issues such as the **sustainability of groups**, how to **gain more members** and **support a growing group**, as well as sharing information on **Digital Eagles**, **Voices in Partnership** and **Make May Purple**.

It was an excellent opportunity to **learn from each other** and **share expertise**. We had so much to discuss that the issues we did not have time to talk about will be on the agenda for the next meeting in autumn. We will continue to **support our groups** to grow and develop the support you offer to stroke survivors and carers.

And on 22 March, around 20 volunteers from our **Stroke Association Voluntary Groups** across



**Hertfordshire** and **Essex** came together for a meeting held at the **Salisbury Arms Hotel in Hertford**. It was a really great occasion which gave volunteers the opportunity to meet each other and **share best practise**. It was especially nice to be joined by so many volunteers from **Speakability in Hertford**.

The group was received an update on what's happening at our charity over the next few months, and lots of feedback was given on how we can **improve the volunteer experience** in our area. We hope this will be the first of many meet-ups going forward.



### Let's get quizzical!

Here's the **Working Age Stroke Group** from Suffolk, enjoying a quiz night put on by the **Inner Wheel** in Woodbridge. A fabulous **£1000** was raised for group funds. The members gave a talk about how the group was so supportive and useful in their recovery, which was well received by everyone.

## Sing a song of sixpence

Many of our **Stowmarket Support Group** members attend **Songlines**, a singing project that's run with **Music in our Bones** for stroke survivors with aphasia.

If you would like to find out more about Songlines please call Tracy Sharp on **01473 405625** or [tracy.sharp43@ntlworld.com](mailto:tracy.sharp43@ntlworld.com).

On 15 March, the **Mayor of Stowmarket, Councillor Barry Humphreys MBE**, visited the group to present a cheque from **Stowmarket Town Council**, for an amazing **£400** to support the work the group is doing. He said how courageous everyone was and that the group are an inspiration to other stroke survivors.



Neil Chapman meeting the Mayor of Stowmarket

## Walking on fire!

Well done to our **SWAGs** member **Claire Ruddock**, who successfully completed our **Valentines Fire Walk** on 19 February, walking on red hot embers of around 1000°F! It was a great night and the atmosphere was fantastic. Here she is receiving her certificate, and take a look at those coals!



## Dance your way to fitness



The **Stowmarket Group** was recently visited by a dancer from **Bellycise**, a local belly dancing exercise group. The dancer demonstrated some belly dancing styles, talked about the history and meanings of belly dancing. She even tempted some members and volunteers to give it a try!

## King's Lynn Tai Chi Group



Graham, Hayley and Coordinator, Diane West

Group member, **Graham**, had a stroke at the end of December 2013 and the following year started attending the **King's Lynn Tai Chi Group**. Tai Chi aids the progression of balance and coordination and also promotes relaxation using breathing techniques.

He and his wife, **Hayley**, run **Game Flight Gun Dogs** training facility, and with the help of **Linda and Brian Chilvers**, an annual competition and test is held for all the dog handlers and dogs to raise funds for the charity. This year Graham has exceeded himself, raising an amazing **£800!**

## Happy birthday to you!

Our **Bishops Stortford Be Yourself Group** celebrated its second birthday on 10 April. The group was set up by Stroke Ambassador and survivor **Sam Barratt**, to offer support and help to prevent others from feeling alone after stroke. The group actively promotes stroke awareness, and members travel from across the counties to attend. **Happy birthday!**

### Contacts

#### Contact us by email:

clubtogether@stroke.org.uk

#### Contact us in the region:

Sara Betsworth  
Regional Director  
Stroke Association  
Hillside Business Park  
5 Hillside Road  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP32 7EA  
Tel: 01284 76006  
sara.betsworth@stroke.org.uk

#### Fundraising in the region:

George Burroughs  
Regional Fundraising Manager  
Hillside Business Park  
5 Hillside Road  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP32 7EA  
Tel: 01284 76006  
george.burroughs@stroke.org.uk

#### Contact us nationally:

Claire Riley  
Vol Communications and  
Engagement Officer  
Stroke Association House  
240 City Road  
London  
EC1V 2PR  
Tel: 020 7566 0323  
claire.riley@stroke.org.uk

## 2017 General Election

Time is running out for stroke survivors: from **December 2017** there will be **no national plan in place for stroke**. We need support in parliament now more than ever, so throughout the elections and beyond, we'll be continuing with our **A New Era for Stroke** campaign, calling for a new national stroke strategy for England.

We are calling on candidates in the **2017 General Election** to pledge their support for a **new national plan**, so that care and treatment for stroke survivors is prioritised, and not overlooked or pushed down the agenda by the new government.

The improvements we want to see are **cost effective** and **vital to patient recovery**, but a national plan is needed to make these improvements possible.

Find the candidates in your area by visiting **stroke.org.uk/GE17** Put in your postcode to be taken to the right information for your area.

We're committed to making sure improvements are made so that **vital support for stroke survivors** is in place.

If you have any questions, please contact  
**campaigns@stroke.org.uk**

## Calendar

### Dates for your diary

**Saturday 20 May**  
**Step Out for Stroke, Sandringham**

**Sunday 4 June**  
**Step Out for Stroke, Chelmsford**

**Saturday 17 June**  
**Step Out for Stroke, Peterborough**

**Sunday 23 July**  
**Step Out for Stroke, Luton**

**Sunday 6 August**  
**Step Out for Stroke, Bury St Edmunds**

### Keep up to date

Don't forget you can keep up to date with all the news, views and events in the east of England by following us on twitter **@StrokeAssocEast** and on Facebook at **Stroke Association East of England**.

