

Communication Support Service – Case study

Mary's story

Mary met Jake when she was 16 years old, and the couple have been happily married for more than 70 years.

But a few years ago, their lives changed forever when Mary had a devastating stroke. She was left with a severe communication difficulty called aphasia, which affects around a third of all stroke survivors. "Before my stroke, I wouldn't put a word wrong", Mary remembers. "But now, when I try to express myself, the words don't always come out right. It is very frustrating."

"Since the stroke, she has always been in pain," Mary's husband Jake tells us. "It's one of these things that one minute you're on a straight line, and the next minute, you don't know where you are. Mary often depends on me, and I usually have to speak for her."

Soon after the stroke, Mary and Jake met Sandra, a Stroke Association Support Coordinator. "What the Stroke Association offers has become a necessity for us," Jake says. "Sandra supported Mary in the time that followed her stroke, helping her to talk and express herself through new strategies, and we now have various communication instruments that are actually helping to bring that confidence back."

Jake has also recognised how our communication cafés have benefited Mary: "Just by meeting the community at the café, it helps you to realise that there are other people who face these challenges. It poses an opportunity to share experiences, and practise communicating." Sandra still supports the couple, and Jake and Mary have found the support invaluable in the longer term: "When Sandra leaves the house, or when we leave the communication group, we are not only left with a smile, but also with the hope that things are going to get better. Long after your first visit from the coordinator, you see vast improvements. You say to yourself: 'Look where I am now'. I dread to think how life had been without the Stroke Association."

Find out more about our Communication Support Service at stroke.org.uk/communicationsupport

