

# Stroke News



Summer 2017

For everyone affected by stroke

## Changing the story

**How innovative stroke research is changing the lives of people like Karen**

### Researching rehabilitation

Dr Sarah Dean tells us about her work

### Golden girl

Paralympian Megan Giglia shares her story

### Money matters

Advice on holiday grants and travel insurance

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

**Stroke**  
association

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# Welcome...

Stroke research is vital in preventing strokes, saving lives and enabling stroke survivors to make the best possible recovery.

This issue, we discover how pioneering research is shaping the future for stroke survivors like Karen (page 6), who made a remarkable recovery thanks to a life-changing new procedure called thrombectomy. Hear how Gethin benefited from participating in clinical trials (page 15), and read our helpline advice on page 16 to learn how you can get involved in stroke research.

We also speak to Dr Sarah Dean about her stroke rehabilitation research (page 12), and introduce the latest recipients of our funding for vascular dementia research (page 10).

Plus, read our tips on cycling after stroke and find out how you can raise money for stroke research by taking part in the Thames Bridges Bike Ride (page 24). I hope you enjoy this edition.

**Christine Webster**  
Editor



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## Longer helpline opening hours

Our helpline is now open on Saturday mornings and for longer on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

**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 near you at  
**[stroke.org.uk/local-support](http://stroke.org.uk/local-support)**



### Clubs and groups

provide a lifeline.  
See **[stroke.org.uk/clubs](http://stroke.org.uk/clubs)**



### Free factsheets

guide you through  
all aspects of stroke. See  
**[stroke.org.uk/shop](http://stroke.org.uk/shop)**



### Financial help

through  
Life After Stroke Grants.  
See **[stroke.org.uk/grants](http://stroke.org.uk/grants)**



# Over to you



While recuperating from a stroke in hospital, there are a few things that are guaranteed: everything you want, particularly the TV remote, will have been moved just out of your reach, and you'll never be able to enjoy a hot cup of tea! Your discharge date is the light at the end of the tunnel. But what then? That's where the guarantees stop.

This is why local stroke clubs, like the one I belong to in Windsor and Maidenhead, are important. They give you something to look forward to and let you start being 'you' again. And on a good day you might even get a nice hot cup of tea!

 Paul Cook



I had a brain haemorrhage at 45, and lost the use of my left arm. Creativity was my gateway back to happiness.

Along with the exercises I was given by my therapist, drawing and writing really helped me to heal emotionally. Having a stroke is not always the end, I have found it a great motivator, and use it every day to fulfil my dreams and ambitions.

 Nicky Rockets

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 25 years, the Stroke Association has awarded over £50 million through 500 research grants, leading to many advances in stroke care. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we can invest in ground-breaking research, fund the next generation of senior stroke researchers, and ensure our research priorities reflect stroke survivors' views.

We showcased some of the latest advancements in stroke research at our Keynote Lecture in May, at which we presented three new Vascular Dementia Priority Programme and Lectureship awards, jointly funded with Alzheimer's Society and the British Heart Foundation. This £2.2 million collaboration addresses the significant gap in understanding, preventing and

treating a disease that affects up to 30% of stroke survivors.

Although stroke is one of the biggest causes of adult disability in the UK, it remains critically under-funded. The recent *Burden of Stroke* report by the Stroke Alliance for Europe found that the number of people affected by stroke is set to rise significantly by 2035. This not only emphasises the importance of stroke research, but also supports our call for improved stroke care and treatment across the UK (see page 20).

With your continued support, we can invest more in research that will help to save lives and enable stroke survivors to make the best possible recovery.

**Juliet Bouverie**



Research award recipients at the Keynote Lecture in May

# Changing the story


It was a normal Wednesday morning when Karen, 58, had a stroke. But thanks to the latest stroke research, she received a ground-breaking new treatment called thrombectomy, which has enabled her to make a remarkable recovery.

"I was getting ready for work when I felt a severe pain over my right temple which I thought was a migraine," recalled Karen. "I was talking to my son and he'd asked if I'd been drinking because my speech was slightly slurred. We joked about it, but he must've sensed something was wrong as he followed me when I went back upstairs and found me collapsed on the bedroom floor. The left side of my face had fallen and I'd lost the use of my left arm and leg, as well as the sight in my left eye."

Karen's son recognised the signs of stroke and called 999 immediately.

Paramedics rushed her to a specialist stroke unit in Nottingham, where a CT scan revealed two blood clots in her brain.

She was referred for a new cutting-edge procedure, thrombectomy, to remove the clots from her brain, and taken straight to theatre. "I remember the surgeon telling me that he would insert a wire through my groin, and up to my brain, where he would be able to grab the clots and pull them out. I was awake and it was all very surreal. Removing the clots hurt a little but 100% blood flow was restored within minutes. ▶



"I remember the surgeon telling me that he would insert a wire through my groin, and up to my brain."





"By the time I came back to the ward I could already move my arm and leg like normal, and my sight was restored. I just couldn't wiggle my fingers. I remember sitting up in the hospital bed and saying 'I will do it, I will move my fingers again', which made my family laugh because I'm known for being stubborn and determined."

To everyone's amazement, Karen spent just two days in hospital, where she was known as the 'walking miracle'. Four weeks later, Karen was back at work. "When my colleagues heard I'd had clots removed from my brain, they were shocked. They thought I'd had all my hair shaved off and been cut open, they didn't realise that it's similar to having a stent fitted."

### "I'm so grateful for the incredible procedure I was able to have."

Thanks to this innovative clot-removing treatment, Karen's made a remarkable physical recovery. Although she's struggled with anxiety and the shock of what happened, she's focusing on thinking positively about the future. "I'm so grateful for the incredible procedure I was able to have. Since my stroke, I've volunteered for the Stroke Association because I think it's important to give back. I'm also more active than I was before the stroke and have joined two walking groups; I love being out in the countryside."



Earlier this year, Karen began training for an impressive 150 mile charity cycle ride with friends. "We cycled the coast to coast trail, from Workington to Sunderland, to raise funds for the Stroke Association."

There were times when it was really tough, and I thought 'why am I doing this?' Then I'd remind myself it's because I can and I'm doing it for those who haven't been as fortunate. They're the motivation."

### Help to fund stroke research and change the story for stroke survivors

Karen's stroke was extremely serious and without thrombectomy her story could have been very different.

Stroke is a leading cause of disability in the UK. Thanks to your generous support, the Stroke Association is able to invest in ground-breaking research into preventing strokes, developing more effective emergency treatments and better ways to make the best possible recovery. Stroke research can help more stroke survivors to live independently in their own homes, return to work and take control of their lives again.

With your help, we can invest more in vital research projects that are needed to change the story for more people.



To donate to stroke research visit  
[stroke.org.uk/Karen](https://stroke.org.uk/Karen)



To find out more about our research visit  
[stroke.org.uk/OurResearch](https://stroke.org.uk/OurResearch)

# Prioritising stroke research



Every year, the Stroke Association funds innovative research studies which aim to prevent and treat stroke, and improve the lives of those it affects.

The stroke research community has achieved major breakthroughs in the last 25 years, transforming the way stroke is treated.

However, there are still areas where progress is limited, and those affected receive little, if any, treatment or support.

To address this, we've worked with stroke survivors and experts to identify and prioritise critical gaps in research. In the last three years, we've launched Priority Award Programmes to fund the most promising projects in three research areas:



## Haemorrhagic stroke:

Strokes caused by brain bleeds are more likely to cause death and severe long-term disability than strokes caused by clots. However, our understanding of them is much less developed. More research is needed to help find new treatments.



## The psychological consequences of stroke:

We need more effective treatments and support services to help people with the hidden, psychological effects of stroke.



## Vascular dementia:

Having a stroke doubles your risk of developing dementia. Vascular dementia is the second most common form of dementia in the UK. Although its link to stroke is well known, it is still poorly understood. A better understanding of how vascular dementia develops could help us to prevent or reduce its effects.

This year, together with the British Heart Foundation and Alzheimer's Society, we granted our first Vascular Dementia Priority Programme Awards to:



## Professor Roxana Carare

Blood vessels remove waste from the brain along tiny channels embedded in their walls. Professor Carare's team are investigating whether the failure of this waste removal process could be a cause of vascular dementia. A better understanding of this could enable the development of effective treatments.

## Professor Karen Horsburgh

Professor Horsburgh's research explores how a mutation in a gene, which has been shown to increase the risk of stroke, affects the brain's blood supply. Her team hope to increase our understanding of how this is linked to vascular dementia, and how drugs could be used to treat it.



## Professor Joanna Wardlaw

By conducting a national study of 2,000 stroke patients, Professor Wardlaw aims to find out how many are affected by memory problems within two years. By comparing those who do and don't develop dementia, her team hope to identify its causes, and learn how to prevent and treat it.

For information about our Priority Awards Programme visit [stroke.org.uk/PriorityAwards](http://stroke.org.uk/PriorityAwards). You can support stroke research by donating what you can at [stroke.org.uk/Karen](http://stroke.org.uk/Karen) or calling 0300 330 0740.



# Researching rehabilitation

The most common effects of stroke are physical. Around 80% of stroke survivors experience muscle weakness, paralysis, stiffness or changes in sensation, usually on one side of their body.



"I have a physiotherapy and health psychology background and am passionate about helping people to benefit from therapeutic exercise."

**Dr Sarah Dean**

Rehabilitation can help people to overcome or adapt to the effects of stroke, enabling them to become more independent. However, once discharged from NHS rehabilitation services, many stroke survivors say they feel abandoned and unsure of what to do to continue their physical recovery.

In 2015, the Stroke Association began funding the ReTrain project. Led by Dr Sarah Dean, Associate

Professor in Psychology Applied to Rehabilitation and Health at Exeter University, the study is investigating whether a community-based rehabilitation programme for stroke survivors could help their long-term recovery.

"ReTrain came about because of a question asked by a stroke survivor called Jim," said Professor Dean. "He'd felt frustrated and left in limbo when his NHS rehabilitation

came to an end. He wanted to know what he should do next, where he could go and who could help him." Jim found the website for the stroke rehabilitation programme, ARNI (Action for Rehabilitation following Neurological Injury), but was keen to know if there was any research evidence to show if its intensive approach worked, and if it would be worthwhile for him to do.

He took his query to PenCLAHRC (the National Institute for Health Research Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care, South West Peninsula). "PenCLAHRC's purpose is to help university people like me to do research that matters to patients and clinicians," said Professor Dean. "Jim's situation is shared by many stroke survivors, so they asked me to investigate. I have a physiotherapy and health psychology background and am passionate about helping people to benefit from therapeutic exercise. Keeping healthy and active is hard at the best of times, but it's particularly difficult when you've had a stroke. My research is about

investigating how to motivate and teach stroke survivors to manage their recovery, as well as getting health professionals better at engaging stroke survivors."

Over the last few years, Professor Dean has worked with Jim and other stroke survivors to develop the project. "ReTrain is an adaptation of ARNI, delivered in a group. It's an intensive programme: two hours, twice a week, for 10 weeks, with homework and regular reviews in between.



**"Stroke has such a huge impact on people's lives, so it's vital that we invest in research across the care pathway"**

"We've used some of ARNI's functional techniques, including teaching people to get up off the floor without holding on to any furniture, equipment or another person. This gives people a sense of independence and confidence because if they fall over when they're on their own, they can get themselves up again."

The study was conducted as a pilot trial with 48 volunteers who were randomly assigned to either ReTrain or the control group. The aim of the pilot was to check if the ReTrain programme and research testing were acceptable to stroke survivors and if running a larger study would be feasible. "We interviewed a number of people in the study who said they found it hard work, but overall were very positive," said Professor Dean. "We'd now like to run a big trial of 400-500 people to fairly test whether ReTrain makes a difference to the lives of stroke survivors."



"We wouldn't have been able to do the pilot study if we hadn't had the Stroke Association funding. They've been helpful and really supportive. Stroke has such a huge impact on people's lives, so it's vital that we invest in research across the care pathway, including prevention, acute care and rehabilitation to help people to recover. If my work can help people to maximise their potential and have the best possible quality of life, then I'll have done a good job."

Find out more about Professor Dean's ReTrain study and its outcomes by visiting [stroke.org.uk/retrain](http://stroke.org.uk/retrain).

# Research champion

Gethin Jones, from Swansea, had a stroke in December 2009 which caused left-sided weakness, particularly affecting his ability to use his left hand.

While in hospital, Gethin learnt about a trial that was investigating the use of focused electrical stimulation to find out whether it could help stroke patients recover movement.

Gethin took part in the research trial for six months. "The focused electrical stimulation had brilliant short term effects," said Gethin. "I was able to open my hand as soon as soon as I received it. However, this only lasted for an hour or so before my hand closed again."

Despite the temporary nature of the improvement, Gethin's involvement has helped researchers to learn more about the treatment's effectiveness and will allow them to refine their ideas further.

"Taking part in the trial was a positive, encouraging and morale-boosting experience," said Gethin. "It's great to think that I could be helping to develop treatments that could have long-term benefits for stroke survivors in the future."



Find out how you can get involved in stroke research via [stroke.org.uk/studies](http://stroke.org.uk/studies) or see page 16 for our helpline advice.



# Getting involved in stroke research

Participating in research studies and clinical trials can be a rewarding experience for stroke survivors, but many are often unsure what they involve or how to take part.



Sarah Whitfield from our Stroke Helpline answers some commonly asked questions.



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

» » » » » » » »  
**New helpline opening hours**  
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## Q Why is research important?

Medical research is vital in developing new treatments and therapies for stroke. New treatments have to be thoroughly tested on willing participants in studies called clinical trials, to check they are safe and effective.

Past stroke clinical trials have looked at stroke risk factors, developing the FAST test, and using clot-busting drugs (thrombolysis) to minimise the damage caused by stroke.

## Q Can anybody take part in research?

Every clinical trial is different and has its own criteria which you'll need to meet to take part. This includes age, gender, type of stroke and time since your stroke. You may need tests, for example blood pressure checks, to see if you are eligible before you take part.

## Q What are the benefits and risks of clinical trials?

Many stroke survivors who take part in clinical trials say they get satisfaction from knowing they're

helping future stroke survivors. There may also be the benefit of gaining access to new treatments before they are widely available.

You should be told everything the researchers know about any possible risks and side effects of that specific trial, so you can make an informed choice about whether or not to take part.

## Q What would I be expected to do?

Clinical trials vary in size and methods. You might be asked to take a few minutes to complete

a simple questionnaire, or participate in a large clinical study over several weeks, months or even years.




**Q How do I join a clinical trial?**  
You can find details on current clinical trials and how to apply on the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) website, **ukctg.nihr.ac.uk**.

For more information, see our *Clinical trials and stroke guide* at **stroke.org.uk/trials**, or visit **stroke.org.uk/studies**.

# Our new Stroke Helpline opening hours

We've extended our Stroke Helpline opening hours, so we're now open on Saturday mornings and for longer during the middle of the week.

This means we can answer your questions about stroke and provide emotional support at times more convenient for you. Our trained staff understand the challenges of living with stroke and can:

-  help you to get practical support locally and put you in touch with others affected by stroke
-  send you information about the effects of stroke
-  tell you more about our Life After Stroke Grants

When Jane Brooks, 47, experienced anxiety after her stroke, she called the helpline for support. "I went into shock," she said. "I had no idea what had happened or why. The lady on the helpline listened to how I felt and answered my questions. She said I could call back any time, and put me in touch with my local Stroke Association Coordinator. I felt much better knowing there was someone to help me and things were going to be ok."

Jane welcomes the changes to our helpline hours. "When you're dealing with the effects of stroke,



Contact our Stroke Helpline on:

-  0303 3033 100
-  [info@stroke.org.uk](mailto:info@stroke.org.uk)
-  [stroke.org.uk/helpline](http://stroke.org.uk/helpline)

the weekends and evenings can seem very long as there are fewer services available. It's reassuring to know that the helpline will help to fill this gap. It'll give people, especially those who work in the day, have young children at home, or care for a stroke survivor, more flexibility to ring at times when they can speak freely."

"We know how important information and support is after a stroke so we're delighted to be extending our helpline service," said Sian McClure, our Head of the Stroke Helpline and Information Service. "Whether stroke has happened to you or someone you know, recently or in the past, please get in touch."

## Our new hours are:

- Monday, Thursday, Friday - 9am to 5pm
- Tuesday, Wednesday - 8am to 6pm
- Saturday - 10am to 1pm



Our helpline tends to be busier between 10am and 4pm. If you call at these times and don't get through, please try again.



# General election update

In the run up to the 2017 general election, we campaigned for a new national plan for stroke in England and improvements to stroke treatment and care in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Receive updates about our campaigning work by signing up to our monthly emails at [stroke.org.uk/campaigning](http://stroke.org.uk/campaigning)



We want to say a big thank you to everyone who took action and wrote to their candidates across the UK. Together we contacted 931 candidates, 133 of whom went on to pledge their support for our campaign.

We are pleased that 27 of these candidates have been elected to parliament and we'll be talking to them about how they can continue to support us and help to prioritise stroke at a national level.

We're now planning the next steps in our A New Era for Stroke campaign in England, and will soon be letting you know how you can lend your support.



**435**  
supporters wrote  
to their candidates



**931**  
candidates were  
contacted



**133**  
candidates pledged  
their support



**27**  
of those candidates  
were elected

## Warrington South local campaign group

Stroke survivors and carers in the Warrington South constituency formed a local campaign group to improve stroke care and treatment in the area.

In the run up to the general election, the group organised a hustings event – a meeting where all candidates standing in the constituency were invited to discuss the group's main concerns about the future of stroke.

On 8 June 2017, Faisal Rashid, who has previously supported the Stroke Association and attended events such as Step Out for Stroke, was elected as the new



MP for the area. The group hope to build on their current success and look forward to working with their newly elected MP.

# Stroke clubs restore confidence

**Debbie Pritchard from Liverpool had a stroke in 2010 as a result of a car accident. Losing her confidence and rarely leaving the house, she didn't think joining a stroke group would be for her. But with support from the Stroke Association, she was encouraged to visit her local group and hasn't looked back since.**

"Initially I couldn't come through the door without someone escorting me," said Debbie. "I didn't want to go anywhere or speak about me, because it's private. I was very cynical, but thought I had to give it a try. I was pointed in the direction of Merseyside Life After Stroke

Group and I've never looked back. The group made me realise that it was ok to talk about what I was feeling and what I'd gone through."

Stroke clubs and groups can provide a friendly environment and essential long-term peer support to stroke survivors, carers, family and friends, helping them to increase their confidence, independence and encouraging them to try new things. Going to the group has made a massive difference to Debbie's life. "It's given me confidence and much more. I can feel it myself and my family see it too. I've done things I never thought I'd do previously, things that challenge me immensely."



Debbie at the UK Stroke Assembly and the Stroke Club Conference



To find stroke clubs and groups in your area visit [stroke.org.uk/strokeclubs](http://stroke.org.uk/strokeclubs)

Three years later, Debbie is now the group secretary and also a volunteer at the Stroke Association. "I thought I could do everything on my own and get back to the way I was without any help, but the group has given me a purpose. We always say if we look after the person next to us, then everyone's taken care of. We're like a massive family."

**"The group made me realise that it was ok to talk about what I was feeling and what I'd gone through."**

Join Debbie and other stroke club and group representatives at the UK Stroke Club Conference 2017 on Friday 29 – Saturday 30 September in Nottingham.

Network with like-minded people, learn about the support available and pick up new ideas to take back to your group. Invitations will be sent to the main club or group contact in July. Places are limited, so make sure you book yours by the end of August.

For more details visit [stroke.org.uk/UKSCC17](http://stroke.org.uk/UKSCC17) or call 01527 903 917.



# Life on two wheels

Jools Walker, cycling blogger and presenter from Newham, is gearing up to take part in the Stroke Association's Thames Bridges Bike Ride just one year after a mini-stroke, also known as a transient ischaemic attack or TIA.

"It was a really big wake-up call," said the 34-year-old author of the VeloCityGirl blog. "I couldn't believe that at 33, a health condition like that had happened to me. I was fit and healthy. It just came out of nowhere.

"The mini-stroke made me realise how precious life is. It put a lot into perspective and I realised I should be doing more of what I love. As a result, I went freelance to alleviate the stress and pressure I felt at work. If it wasn't for the mini-stroke, I wouldn't have changed my life so drastically, but I'm so glad I did. I now have time to work on my blog and presenting, meeting lots of new people along the way.

"I'm so excited to take part in the Thames Bridges Bike Ride! I've cycled across some amazing places, but I've lived in London

my whole life and it will always be a special place for me. I'm excited to join the team and be part of the buzz on the day while cycling around London."



Join the Thames Bridges Bike Ride on Sunday 1 October 2017. Our 8, 35 and 55-mile routes start and finish at King's House Sports Ground in Chiswick. Visit [stroke.org.uk/tbbr17](http://stroke.org.uk/tbbr17) or contact [tbbr@stroke.org.uk](mailto:tbbr@stroke.org.uk) or 0300 330 0740 to book.

"I'm so excited to take part in the Thames Bridges Bike Ride!"

## On your bike

**Jools' top tips for cycling after stroke and training for the Thames Bridges Bike Ride:**



Listen to your body and give it a chance to recover. Rest when you need to.



Go for regular rides as part of your training, whether it's around your local park, or to and from the shops.



Find a rhythm and pace that's comfortable for you. This bike ride isn't a race so you can take your time.



To cope with fatigue, make sure you're well hydrated and take cycling-friendly snacks to keep you nourished. Eat well the day before; slow-burning energy foods like pasta are my pre-ride food.



You'll be supported by the Stroke Association team throughout the day, so hop on your bike, take in the sights and enjoy the ride!

Together we can conquer stroke



# Golden girl

Megan Giglia was working as a sports instructor when she had haemorrhagic stroke in 2013. With the help of a Life After Stroke Grant, she began her journey to competing in the Paralympic Games.

After the stroke, Megan experienced right side paralysis, fatigue, epilepsy and became depressed. Deciding she needed a change, Megan took a bike, tied her foot to a pedal and her hand to a handlebar, and cycled 120 miles to see a friend. "My friend's mum gave me a mission to find something and be the best I could be. She had terminal cancer but was still enjoying her life. It was the wake-up call I needed: there was more to life than what I'd lost. I couldn't do the things I used to do, so I tried something new. I attended a para-cycling taster session. It was the best day of my life."

Determined to improve, Megan applied for a Life After Stroke Grant to buy equipment to ride safely indoors. "The grant made



Megan celebrating her MBE with Floella Benjamin at an event at the Ritz

such a difference to my training, especially when I was struggling with my right side paralysis." A year after her stroke, Megan was accepted onto the Paralympic Programme, and, in 2016, was selected for the Rio Paralympic team. "Everyone was focused on doing sport to the best of their ability. It was all about what they could do, not what they couldn't."

When Megan won GB's first gold, she dedicated her victory to 10-year-old stroke survivor,

See page 24  
to find out how  
to join in the  
Thames Bridges  
Bike Ride.

Alasdair Rowan. "I get embarrassed receiving medals, so I started dedicating every main event I do to a stroke survivor to give me an extra reason to win."

Since Rio, Megan's received an MBE and started training for Tokyo 2020 and the Stroke Association's Thames Bridges Bike Ride. "My life has changed for the better, but it took time to find the 'new me' and be happy with who I am. Lots of stroke survivors contacted me after Rio. Some were feeling lost, so I'd give them a mission: record everything good that happens to you and remember this when you're feeling bad. That can give you the push you need to keep you on track."

## Could you benefit from a Life After Stroke Grant?

Visit [stroke.org.uk/grant-help](https://stroke.org.uk/grant-help), email [Grants.External@stroke.org.uk](mailto:Grants.External@stroke.org.uk), or call our helpline on **0303 3033 100** to learn more. Read more of Megan's story at [stroke.org.uk/Megan](https://stroke.org.uk/Megan).

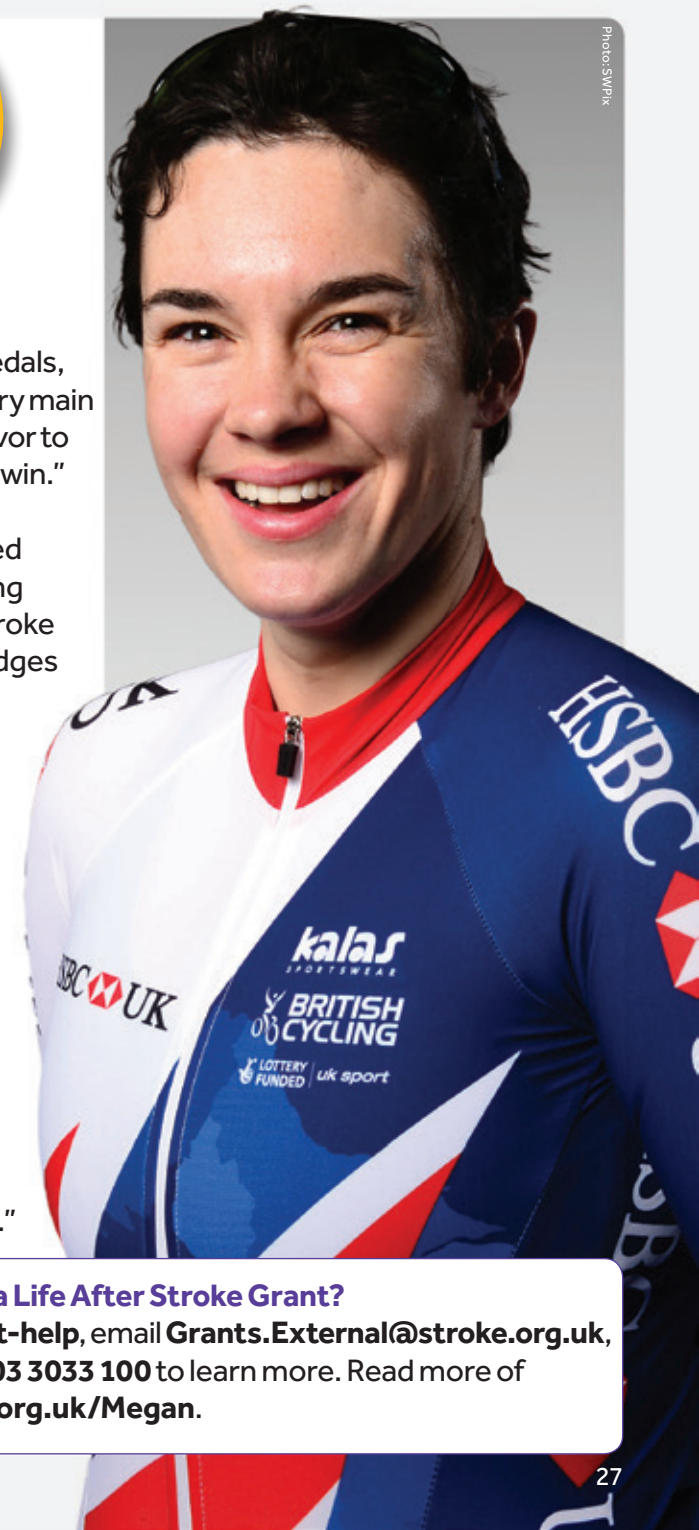


Photo: SWPix



# A lasting legacy



**Sylvia's friends remember her for her kind heart and her strong desire to help others. Working as medical secretary, she followed medical advances keenly. That's how she found out that with conditions such as stroke, the right treatment and support can make all the difference when given promptly.**

Sadly, Sylvia suffered ill-health most of her life. She fought hard to preserve her dignity and independence, so decided to help others to do the same by leaving a gift in her Will.

Legacy gifts make up nearly half of all donations we receive, and play a crucial role in helping us to conquer stroke. Sylvia's legacy is now helping us to fund vital services and research that benefits the lives of thousands of stroke survivors each year.

Find out more about leaving a gift in your Will or our Free Will Scheme by contacting the Legacy Team on **020 7566 1505** or **legacy@stroke.org.uk**.

## Making a Will

Alfred Newton Solicitors are based in the Stockport area and have supported the Stroke Association Free Will Scheme for over 10 years. Here, Senior Partner, Anthony Penman, shares his advice on making a Will:

### Why should I make my Will with a solicitor?

Having an up-to-date Will is the safest way of ensuring that your property, savings and possessions are divided as you intend.



An experienced, regulated solicitor can tailor your Will to your needs and point out any issues or ways it could be challenged, helping to make sure it reflects your wishes as far as legally possible.

Visit **solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk** to find regulated solicitors near you.

### What happens if I die without leaving a Will?

The law decides how your estate is divided, so your property might not pass to those you'd want to receive it. There's no opportunity to specify who gets particular items either, which can sometimes cause family

disputes. Speaking to a solicitor can help to avoid this.

### When's the best time to make a Will and how much does it cost?

It's never too soon to make a Will, but people are often prompted by getting married, having children (you need to appoint a guardian in your Will), buying a house or health issues.

A Will can cost upwards of £150, but if you're 60 and over, or a stroke survivor of any age, you can arrange to have a simple Will made free of charge with the Stroke Association Free Will Scheme.

# Christmas

The quality of the 2017 Christmas card competition entries was so high, our panel decided to select two winners. Congratulations to Haydn Canter for his *Majestic Morning* design, and William Benson for *Snowman Sparkles*.

In 2014, Haydn, 60, had a stroke that paralysed his left side. He found losing his independence and re-learning skills, like writing and painting with his non-dominant hand, incredibly frustrating, but didn't give up.

He joined an art group for stroke survivors in Cardiff, which helped his recovery. "We're like-minded souls who get together to share our experiences and paint," said Haydn. "Every painting is an achievement. It's important to take every day as it comes and be positive."

Haydn's now a Stroke Ambassador and runs his own art classes at Llandough Hospital Stroke Unit. He also fundraises for local stroke services by selling his artwork and organising exhibitions.



"I thoroughly enjoyed creating this painting and I'm delighted that it's been selected for this year's Christmas card. The stag was my old high school badge, which has brought me some luck!"

# crackers

William was three years old when he suddenly stopped speaking and couldn't co-ordinate the right side of his body. His parents took him to hospital where they confirmed he'd had a stroke.

Fortunately, within days Will's speech returned and he started walking again. "Over the next six months our lives revolved around getting his strength back and helping him to learn to use his right hand and both hands together," remembered his mum, Madeleine. "Although he still has weakness on his right side and struggles with co-ordination, Will's made a remarkable recovery. He's so happy to have won. It's an enormous confidence boost."



"I'm really pleased that Will's design will be used to raise money for the Stroke Association, as the organisation has been so helpful to us. We're both very excited and I'll be telling as many people as possible to buy his cards!"

Haydn and William's designs can be ordered from our Christmas shop, along with our wonderful range of cards and gifts. Visit [stroke.org.uk/cards](http://stroke.org.uk/cards) or call 01233 214 320 to order.

For details on how to enter the 2018 Christmas card competition, visit [stroke.org.uk/cardcomp18](http://stroke.org.uk/cardcomp18) or email [cardcompetition@stroke.org.uk](mailto:cardcompetition@stroke.org.uk).



# Concentration problems after stroke

After a stroke, your brain can find it difficult to filter all the information it receives and decide what to focus on and what to ignore. This can affect your ability to concentrate.

Concentration difficulties are common after a stroke. You may get distracted easily, or struggle to absorb and remember information. Tiredness, pain or emotional problems like depression can also affect your ability to stay focused.

Here are a few techniques that can help you to cope with concentration problems:

- Do one thing at a time. Focus on finishing one task before starting another.
- Ask people to keep things simple when they give you information. If it helps, get them to write it down, or repeat it back to them in your own words to make sure you've understood.
- Minimise visual distractions by reducing clutter. For example, keep just the kettle, cups and teabags on the kitchen counter. This may help you to focus when you make a cup of tea.
- Keep activities to half an hour, or as long as you can manage. If a task takes longer, take a break and come back to it later.
- Write a 'to-do' list and decide which tasks are most important. So if you have a bad day, you'll know what to focus on and what to leave for later.
- If you're expecting a visitor, going to an appointment, or doing something where you'll need to concentrate, then plan to have a rest immediately before.

For further advice, visit [stroke.org.uk/concentration](https://stroke.org.uk/concentration) or call 0303 3033 100.



# AllClear's travel insurance tips

The Stroke Association has partnered with AllClear to offer stroke survivors, supporters, family and friends specialist medical travel insurance. Here are AllClear's top tips to make sure you are properly covered when buying travel insurance:

## 1 Consider your holiday destination

Your destination can have a big impact on your insurance costs. Some countries, including Spain, have high medical care costs which can increase premiums. However, Morocco is often considered part of Europe for travel insurance purposes so cover can be cheaper than other African destinations.

## 2 Declare all countries you intend to visit during your holiday

This includes day trips across a border into a different country, and flying into one airport before travelling to another country.

## 3 Declare all medical conditions

It's important to give your insurers accurate information on all pre-existing medical conditions to ensure you are covered for all medical eventualities.

\* For more details see [stroke.org.uk/allclear](http://stroke.org.uk/allclear). The Stroke Association is an Introducer Appointed Representative of AllClear Insurance Services Limited. AllClear Insurance Services Limited, registered in England No. 4255112. Registered Office: AllClear House, 1 Redwing Court, Ashton Road, Romford, RM3 8QQ. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority firm reference number 311244. AllClear is a registered trademark.

### Getting a quote

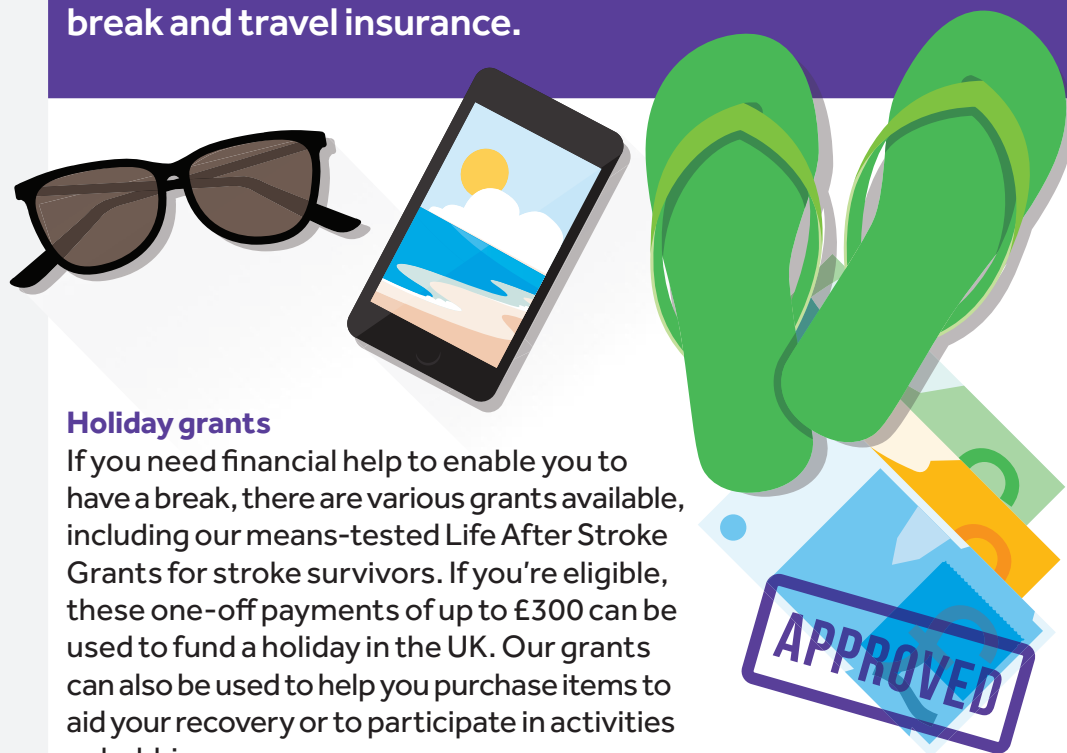
For more information about AllClear's travel insurance, visit [stroke.org.uk/allclear](http://stroke.org.uk/allclear) or call 0808 168 8733. AllClear will contribute up to 20% of your premium to the Stroke Association when you purchase a policy\*.





# Money matters

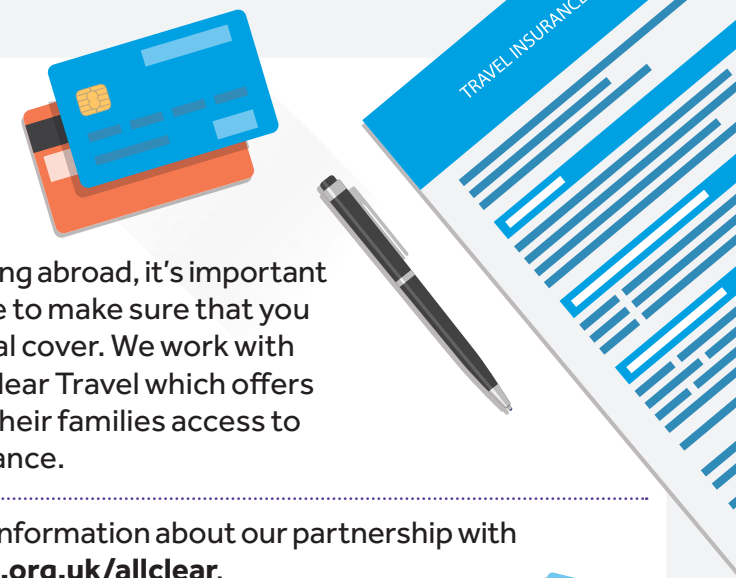
Going on holiday is an important part of life after stroke. Re-engaging with life is a key part of recovery and a break can certainly help to recharge your batteries. Apart from choosing where to go, there are the practical things to think about too, such as how to pay for your break and travel insurance.



## Holiday grants

If you need financial help to enable you to have a break, there are various grants available, including our means-tested Life After Stroke Grants for stroke survivors. If you're eligible, these one-off payments of up to £300 can be used to fund a holiday in the UK. Our grants can also be used to help you purchase items to aid your recovery or to participate in activities or hobbies.

For more information about Life After Stroke Grants and how to apply, visit [stroke.org.uk/grant-help](http://stroke.org.uk/grant-help) or email [grants.external@stroke.org.uk](mailto:grants.external@stroke.org.uk).



## Travel insurance

If you're thinking of going abroad, it's important to get travel insurance to make sure that you have adequate medical cover. We work with a company called AllClear Travel which offers stroke survivors and their families access to specialist travel insurance.

See page 34 for more information about our partnership with AllClear or visit [stroke.org.uk/allclear](http://stroke.org.uk/allclear).

## European Health Insurance Card

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) allows you to receive state-provided healthcare in some European countries at a reduced cost, or sometimes for free. However, it doesn't cover any private healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK or treatment on cruises, so you still need travel insurance as well. Be aware that some unofficial websites make a charge for this card but you can apply for a free card directly from the NHS Business Services Authority.

To find out more about applying for an EHIC, visit [ehic.org.uk](http://ehic.org.uk) or call **0300 330 1350**.



If you'd like further advice on planning a holiday after stroke:



see our *Holidays after stroke* factsheet at [stroke.org.uk/holidays](http://stroke.org.uk/holidays)



contact our Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or [info@stroke.org.uk](mailto:info@stroke.org.uk)

# Puzzles

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

## Word search

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

ART HOLIDAY  
CYCLING KNOWLEDGE  
ELECTION RESEARCH  
FUNDING SUMMER  
FUTURE WILLS

## Across

- 1 Aloofness, reserve (8)  
5 Stave pitch symbol (4)  
9 Ascertain (a size) (7)  
10 Series of links (5)  
11 Coffee seed (4)  
12 Lose lustre (7)  
14 Mitigate; forgive (6)  
16 Group of sports clubs (6)  
19 One eighth of a mile (7)  
21 Animals hunted for food (4)  
24 Wear away (5)  
25 Capital of Libya (7)  
26 Native of Warsaw (4)  
27 Fine soft wool (8)

## Lottery

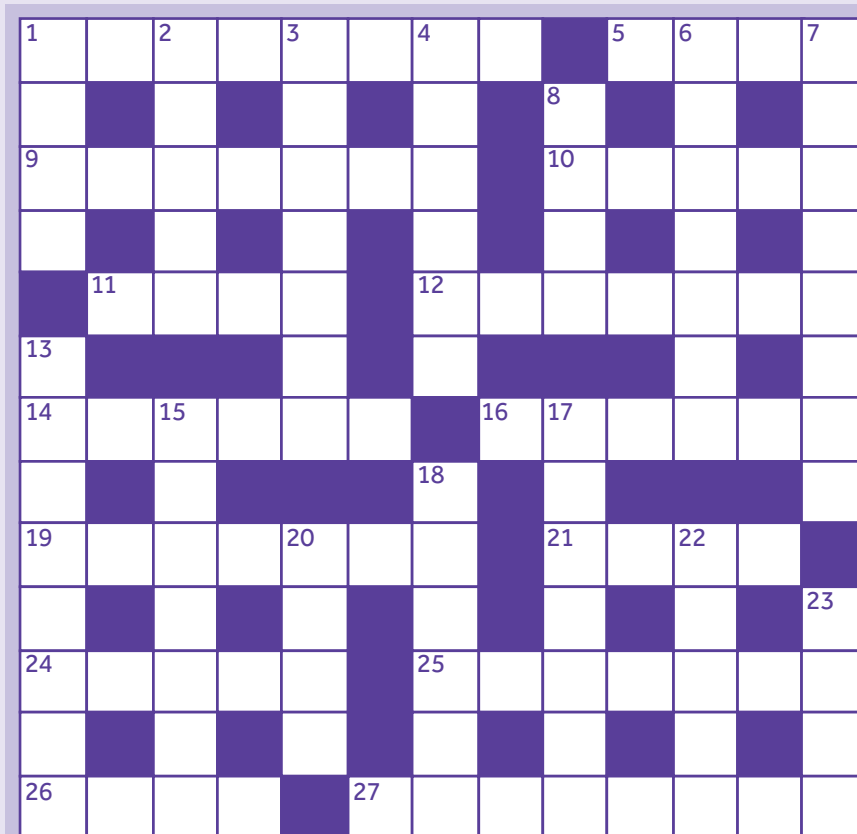
For your chance to win £25,000 every week, play the Stroke Association Charity Lottery. Find out more at [stroke.zaffo.com](http://stroke.zaffo.com)



## Down

- 1 US ten-cent coin (4)  
2 Wooden post; ante (5)  
3 Former pupil (7)  
4 Bring into existence (6)  
6 Departing (7)  
7 North London area (8)  
8 Maple genus (4)  
13 The use of one's own efforts to achieve (4-4)  
15 Alice author (7)  
17 Language (7)  
18 — Christie, author (6)  
20 Furnace, kiln (4)  
22 Henry —, C20 English sculptor (5)  
23 Eg, Sauternes (4)

**Solutions**  
See page  
42



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.

Thank you to Lucy and Kate Trafford, and the 90 cyclists who took part in the Saddle for Stroke London to Paris ride. So far they've raised £115,000 in memory of their mum, Tina.



Congratulations to stroke survivor Liam Stapleton, who ran the Brighton Marathon and raised £2,000. To join Team Stroke for Brighton 2018, email [southeastcoastfundraising@stroke.org.uk](mailto:southeastcoastfundraising@stroke.org.uk).



Find out what events we've got coming up on page 42 or make a donation at [stroke.org.uk/donating](http://stroke.org.uk/donating)

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 in giving advice.

£50 could help us to invest in life-saving stroke research.



Well done to CDW UK's Partner Management and Marketing Team who ran the Las Vegas Rock n Roll Half Marathon and raised £13,409.



Amazing supporters in Scotland, like Lydia Rissmann and Strathaven Hotel, Slorach Wood Architects (pictured), and Stirling Audi, have been busy hosting lots of exciting events. Collectively they've raised over £5,000 for stroke.

## Volunteer spotlight

Natalie began volunteering after her mum had a stroke in 2012. "I have a rare condition and use a wheelchair, so initially worried that I wouldn't have much to offer as I couldn't physically help out," said Natalie. "But I've always been a chatter box and was told this was just as important."

"I do as much as I'm able: I fundraise, give talks, help out at events and attend stroke cafés in Manchester. I'm also assisting with a research project on improving support for carers. Volunteering has enabled me to rebuild my confidence and to feel like I have purpose again."



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

# Dates for your diary

## Christmas shop opens 7 August - 19 December

Buy Christmas cards, including Hayden and William's designs (page 30) from **stroke.org.uk/cards**.

## Thames Bridges Bike Ride 1 October

Cycle our 8, 35 or 55-mile routes (see page 24). Visit **stroke.org.uk/tbbr17** to book.



## Rough Runner, Manchester 21-22 October

Join Team Stroke for this game-show-inspired obstacle course challenge, with 5, 10 or 15km routes to suit all fitness levels.

Visit **stroke.org.uk/roughrunner17** to sign up.

## Give a Hand and Bake 23-29 October

Roll up your sleeves and get baking to support those affected by stroke and mark World Stroke Day on 29 October. Visit **stroke.org.uk/GAH17**.

## Wales Stroke Assembly 15 November

A new one-day event for those affected by stroke living in Wales. Book via **stroke.org.uk/walessa**.



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

## Crossword

**Across:** 1 DISTANCE, 5 CLEF, 9 MEASURE, 10 CHAIN, 11 BEAN, 12 TARNISH, 14 EXCUSE, 16 LEAGUE, 19 FURLONG, 21 GAME, 24 ERODE, 25 TRIPOLI, 26 POLE, 27 CASHMERE

**Down:** 1 DIME, 2 STAKE, 3 ALUMNUS, 4 CREATE, 6 LEAVING, 7 FINCHLEY, 8 ACER, 13 SELF HELP, 15 CARROLL, 17 ENGLISH, 18 AGATHA, 20 OVEN, 22 MOORE, 23 WINE

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