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Stroke
association

A complete guide to

Work and stroke



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Please note: we created this guide with the help of professionals who support stroke survivors into employment. However it is not intended to be a substitute for individual advice.

We strongly recommend that you speak to specialists in areas like employment law or personal finance, to help make sure you are as informed as possible on your options and rights.

Who is this guide for?

- anyone who has recently had a stroke and is thinking about returning to work
- anyone who has a disability or health problem after a stroke, and needs tips on managing at work
- anyone changing jobs or careers after a stroke.

This guide aims to provide you with all the information you need to help you think about working after a stroke. It provides information on disability rights at work, and tips for changing career or volunteering. This guide also gives tips on planning your return to work when you feel ready.

Even if you do not think of yourself as disabled, the information given here may still apply to you. You might be eligible for support even if you have made a good recovery.

You may have returned to work and need some support to help you in your job. This guide will help you to understand what support is available and how to get it.

“I wish I had had this guide straight after my stroke. My employer wasn’t all that supportive and I felt so alone. Having a guide like this would have made me feel like I had options and given me the confidence to ask for support.”

Liza-Jane, stroke survivor

Section 1:

While you are off work after a stroke

Will I be able to go back to work?

With the right care, support and advice many people do return to work. Whether you are able to return to work and how long it takes will depend on the effects of your stroke, the type of care and support you received, what work you were doing before and the amount of support your employer can give you.

How long will I be off work?

Every stroke is different, and every recovery is different. Someone who had a small stroke could return to work within weeks, while others may return after months or a couple of years. There's no set pattern.

Talk to your doctors, nurses, and therapists about what you can expect. The most important thing is to take things as they come and follow any treatment or rehabilitation therapy you may have been given.

Stroke affects people in many different ways and the effects of a stroke may change over time. You should return to your GP right away if you experience new problems after a stroke.

Timing

It's helpful not to rush back to work too quickly following a stroke. For many, financial or career pressures mean they want to go back full time as soon as possible. However, it's important to do so only when you feel well enough, have received support and have a plan in place with your employer for your return.

You may get advice from professionals, your employer and your family who might all have differing opinions about your return to work after stroke. Remember, you are the expert in your own needs, so try to keep control over decisions about returning to work.

Many people find that work helps with their recovery. It can give a sense of purpose and focus to your day, provided you can cope with the demands of the job.

What should I tell my employer?

If possible contact your employer yourself. Tell them that you have had a stroke, that you are taking part in rehabilitation, and that you will contact them again. Ideally, you should specify when you will next be in touch to discuss your return. If you need advice, your GP or occupational therapist can

Section 1: While you are off work after a stroke

help you come up with a time frame.

Ask your employer for a copy of their policy on returning to work after sick leave. It is also useful to ask for a copy of the job description for your current role, or any alternative roles that you are considering.

Make sure you keep in touch with your employer. This should help you feel less isolated and ease your worries about returning to work. Talk through your thoughts, concerns and options with someone you trust and who will support you in making your decision to return.

Many employers will be supportive of your return to work. Some employers may lack the knowledge or experience for supporting people after a stroke. Our 'Complete guide to stroke for employers' could be helpful for managers and HR staff to read. This can be downloaded from [stroke.org.uk](https://www.stroke.org.uk).

Occasionally, an employer can show a lack of understanding. Section 3 of this guide has information about your rights at work and how to get help if you have difficulties.

Tips for planning your return to work

Each time you speak to your employer, only give them the facts they need.

Helpful information to give your employer could be:

- the date of your stroke
- your likely date of discharge from hospital
- a date that you'll be back in touch with them to discuss how you are recovering.

Try not to be speculative or emotional, or give the impression that your condition is worse than it is. It may be helpful to talk through what you intend to say to your employer with a friend, family member, or healthcare professional first.

"[My employer was] going through a re-structure while I was away. I had to be the one to make the effort and suggest support I needed. Luckily, they took it on board. You have to be quite proactive sometimes."

Tom, stroke survivor

Section 1: While you are off work after a stroke

Dealing with the effects of the stroke while you are preparing to return to work

The effects of stroke can include:

- physical problems: for example, difficulty moving around or using your arms or legs
- cognitive problems: these include problems with thinking, memory and concentration
- aphasia: difficulty speaking or understanding language, which can also affect reading and writing
- fatigue: extreme tiredness which doesn't get better with rest
- emotional changes: for example, feeling tearful or anxious
- behaviour changes: this can include increased irritability or becoming shy due to lack of confidence.

Changes to behaviour may be particularly difficult for colleagues to adjust to. Try to acknowledge these changes as they come up and explain it's an effect of the stroke and that this may get better over time.

A number of the effects of stroke can't be seen (such as anxiety or cognitive problems). We call these 'hidden' disabilities but they can make a big difference to the way a person deals with everyday experiences. Very often people aren't aware of these problems until they are back at work.

The Stroke Association offers advice and information on the effects of stroke. Turn to Section 5 for details.



Section 1: While you are off work after a stroke

Emotional and behaviour changes

A stroke is sudden and shocking, and affects every part of your life. It's a lot to deal with, and everyone reacts differently. Sometimes, when things seem difficult, anxiety and frustration can make people feel that they're unable to cope. Worry and loss of confidence can stop people from returning to work.

Tips for managing emotional changes at work

- Frequent reviews will help both you and your employer. This will allow you to identify issues early on and put in place any changes that are needed.
- Ask if your organisation can offer any counselling or emotional support.
- Ask your GP about emotional support and counselling or find out about services you can refer yourself to. Our Stroke Helpline can tell you more.

Try to get all the therapy and support you need

Following a stroke you may have support from the following health professionals:

- occupational therapist
- speech and language therapist
- physiotherapist
- neuropsychologist
- vocational rehabilitation. This is often delivered by a specialist occupational therapist.

The help you get will depend on the effects of the stroke and what is available where you live. If you feel you might benefit from a type of therapy but aren't receiving it, contact your GP and ask for a referral.

Section 1: While you are off work after a stroke

Financial support

Whether you plan to return to work or not you should find out what financial support you may be entitled to. Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to claim benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance. You may also be eligible for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) which is designed to help meet some of the extra costs of long-term ill-health or disability. It is not means tested, so you can claim it while you are working.

There is a range of benefits for people who are on a low income or unable to work. You can find out more online at gov.uk. Our guide 'Benefits and financial assistance' gives details of the range of financial help available. You can also contact your local Citizens Advice for advice.

Many benefits, including ESA, are now part of the new Universal Credit system. For more information visit gov.uk/universalcredit or call the Universal Credit helpline **0800 328 5644**, textphone **0800 328 1344**.

Remember that there shouldn't be any embarrassment about claiming benefits. The system is there to support people. Benefits can provide much-needed help, and relieve the burden after stroke. Some people think that benefits are always long-term, but in fact you may claim for a short time while you are recovering and not able to work.

You should also check with your employer what their policy is on pay during sickness absence. Some organisations offer good benefits and others provide Statutory Sick Pay only. Statutory Sick Pay means the basic level of sick pay set by the UK Government. Some employers have insurance schemes to cover sickness. Others offer pay which may reduce over time, depending on your contract and how long you have been an employee.

Tip: check any personal insurance policies you may have, which might pay out in the event of a serious illness or loss of earnings.

Complete guide to stroke for employers

Our guide for employers provides vital information on the effects of stroke, and tips on supporting employees in the workplace. Download free from stroke.org.uk.

Section 2:

Planning your return to work

Look at going back to work as part of your recovery, rather than the end of your recovery. When you feel you may be ready to return, your employer should work with you to identify what your needs are and what adjustments they can make to help you.

Think about a phased return. This means a gradual return to work starting off part time and building up to full time hours, to ease back into work.

Travel

Travelling to work can be tiring. You might need support with the journey if you have a physical disability or sight loss. You could try the journey on a non-work day to find out how you manage. You could also ask to work from home some of the time. This could be a 'reasonable adjustment' to help you back to work. See Section 3 for more about reasonable adjustments.

What do I need to do?

If you have an occupational therapist, they can talk about the work you were doing before your stroke and help you to set realistic goals about returning. They can advise on aids or equipment that you may need.

You may be able to get access to a specialist vocational rehabilitation professional through your employer or local authority. Speak to your occupational therapist or GP to find out more.

Help offered by Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus can give help and advice to job-seekers with disabilities. A Work Coach gives individual support. There are also disability specialists called Disability Employment Advisers. They work alongside the Work Coaches, and sometimes work with individuals.

Create a return-to-work plan

Returning to work doesn't necessarily mean returning to the same job with the same roles and responsibilities. Even if you can no longer do exactly the same role you did before, there may still be other options to explore. Think about your expectations, skills and stamina.

Section 2: Planning your return to work

What is a return-to-work plan?

This is a plan of action that details someone's support needs following a stroke. Planning for your return and looking at how you will manage the effects of the stroke means you are more likely to stay in work once you return.

What should it contain?

Information about the effects of stroke

You don't need to go into lots of medical detail, just a summary of the effects of the stroke. Look at each effect in turn and think about practical steps you can take to address each one.

Your tasks

The focus should be on what you can do rather than what you can't. Take a look at your job description with your line manager or human resources officer. Talk about the tasks you can do to start with, and what you feel you could work up to later. Try to think about practical solutions to things that might be difficult for you, such as using equipment or lifting objects. Share your ideas with your employer and try to work together to come up with solutions.

Hours of work

You could look at the option of phasing your return. This means starting part time and gradually increasing the number of hours and days you work. Think about what may work best for you, such as starting later if you need

longer to get up and out of the house. You may need longer breaks to help you manage any fatigue.

"I loved my job, I just wanted to get back to it after my stroke. I was also a mum with a family to support. It was hard to adjust to different tasks but easing my way in meant I could cope with the fatigue."

Nadia, stroke survivor

Review

Regular reviews are important to help you see how you are managing your tasks. They also let your employer feed back about how they feel things are going. Think about how this will take place, and agree the time frame and expectations. It could be informal, such as 20 minutes every week with your line manager. Keep some brief notes of each meeting.

Communicating the stroke to the staff team

You can help decide how to share information about your stroke with other members of staff. You may choose not to tell them you have had a stroke, just that you will return part time and that your tasks have changed. Another option is an email could be sent to your team from your line manager, with text that has been agreed by you.

Section 2: Planning your return to work

“My boss made an announcement about my stroke to my team. I felt really disempowered. I wish I could have had the option to tell them myself.”

Alina, stroke survivor

Breaks

Many people will need to have more frequent breaks to help beat fatigue, such as five minutes after every hour worked.

Time off for appointments

If you need time off for hospital appointments or therapy, bring this up early on and get it agreed with your employer.

Take a flexible approach

The effects of a stroke can come and go over time. If you are having regular meetings with your manager, you can talk about these changes and how they are affecting your work.

You can talk about things you find difficult, and also let them know if you are feeling ready to take on more or different tasks.

This doesn't have to be formal, it can be over a cup of coffee for half an hour on a Friday to see how the week has gone. It can be a good idea to keep brief notes and summarise any actions. You or your manager can make the notes, but make sure you agree them.

Changes at work

There may have been changes within your organisation while you were away on sick leave. If possible, find out about any changes and their likely effects on you or your position before you go back to work, and talk to your manager if you are concerned.

Keep a diary

This can be very simple, just a log of any key dates such as when you took on more or different tasks and how they went. This can help you to see how you are progressing and re-build your confidence.

“I often wondered: ‘Am I doing ok?’ I think having a diary or keeping a note of when I took on additional tasks would have helped me to see the progress I was making.”

Henry, stroke survivor

Section 2: Planning your return to work

Talking to colleagues about your stroke

You may be understandably nervous about how colleagues will react to you and the fact you had a stroke. Remember it's your choice whether you discuss your stroke with colleagues. Sometimes being open and answering questions can help people to understand and be more supportive. Don't be embarrassed or apologise for the effects of your stroke. It can help your colleagues if you explain what a stroke is and how it has affected you, particularly if the effects are 'invisible'.

"I was often told I didn't look like I'd had a stroke. I could tell my team were wondering why I was doing such reduced tasks. I think telling them would have helped them to understand my memory problems and educated them a bit about stroke."

Harvinder, stroke survivor

Talk to other stroke survivors

Hearing how others overcame barriers to return to work and sharing your experiences with others of a similar age can help you deal with feelings of isolation. It can also give you ideas on what to do if you experience similar problems. Contact the Stroke Helpline to find out about support in your area.

Top tips

- It's important to have open, regular communication with your employer.
- Some stroke survivors struggle to talk about their difficulties or may not wish to. Remember it can be difficult for your employer to understand 'hidden problems' such as fatigue.
- Try to remain open, and encourage your employer to do the same.
- Ask them to be as supportive and patient as they can.

Section 3:

Your rights at work

This section explains what the law says about disability and work and what you should expect from your employer.

Disability discrimination

Disability discrimination is against the law. It happens when an employee is treated less favourably due to their disability. This treatment might be direct and obvious, or it may be the result of a policy that appears equal but actually disadvantages some groups. For example, requiring everyone to enter a building via stairs may be indirect discrimination.

Harassment and victimisation can be viewed as types of discrimination, if they are linked to a disability.

Disability leave

Some employers have a disability leave policy which allows employees to take paid leave related to their disability, such as for treatment or rehabilitation. This is separate from sickness absence. Disability leave is treated as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act, and employers are not obliged to offer it.

Find out how your employer treats absence due to disability. This should be in the staff handbook, or you can ask your line manager or a trade union representative, if you have one.

If disability leave is not available in your workplace, time off for medical appointments may be considered a reasonable adjustment, which is described in greater detail on page 14.

Find out more about your rights

There is useful information about your rights at work on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website: [equalityhumanrights.com/disability](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/disability)

Am I disabled?

The legal definition of a disability in the UK is a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect on your ability to carry out daily activities.

You might not think of yourself as disabled, but the law is there to help everyone, including people with hidden disabilities like cognitive and emotional problems.

The Equality Act 2010 exists to protect people from all types of discrimination, including disability-based discrimination. It covers many aspects of life including work, travel and access to services.

Section 3: Your rights at work

Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 states that a disability should not stop someone from working or having the same rights and access to opportunities as other people. Employers have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' for employees who are disabled.

What is a reasonable adjustment?

A reasonable adjustment is a change to the workplace or the way a disabled person does their job in order to allow them to work. This may mean changing work times, transferring to another post or providing specialist equipment to help with certain tasks.

Reasonable adjustments do not have to be expensive or complicated. It's about looking at the barriers a person is experiencing and thinking creatively about removing them.

Employers cannot ask the disabled person to meet the cost of any reasonable adjustments. Employers should allow time to make sure reasonable adjustments can be made before an employee returns to work.

Tip: even if your difficulties do not meet the legal definition of a disability, your employer can still make adjustments to help you.

Examples of reasonable adjustments:

1. getting more time to complete tasks
2. getting help from a support worker
3. changing the time you start and finish work to avoid rush hour travel
4. changing tasks to suit what a person can do
5. changing targets or getting support from other colleagues to meet targets
6. Reducing working hours. You are only legally entitled to be paid for the hours you actually work, but ask your employer about their policy
7. being allowed to take time off to attend hospital appointments
8. regular meetings with your manager to see how the tasks set are going
9. working in a quieter office
10. speaking to your organisation's occupational health team.

Section 3: Your rights at work

Be clear about your support needs

The duty to make reasonable adjustments only applies when someone has a disability as defined in the Equality Act. It does not apply if the employer could not reasonably be expected to know that a person is disabled. It is therefore very important to be honest about the effects of your stroke and keep in contact with your employer. The way your stroke affects your work should be documented in your return-to-work plan and reviewed regularly.

“I was worried my boss wouldn’t understand. I didn’t want help from anyone. Luckily my workplace was amazing. I had a phased return, and my line manager and I concentrated on the less complicated tasks first. I’ve now increased my hours and feel more confident.”

Robert, stroke survivor

Organisations that can help

Access to Work

Access to Work can help you if your health or disability affects the way you do your job, and your condition is likely to last 12 months or more. It gives you and your employer advice and support with extra costs which may arise because of your needs at work. See Section 5, or visit [gov.uk/access-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work).

Fit for Work

Fit for Work offers information and resources from occupational health specialists. See Section 5, or visit [fitforwork.org](https://www.fitforwork.org).

Specialist Employability Support

Specialist Employability Support is a government scheme providing intensive support and training to support you into work if you have a disability. The service is delivered by Jobcentre Plus staff, or by an organisation with expertise supporting people with disabilities. These include Royal National College for the Blind, Remploy and Shaw Trust. You can apply through Jobcentre Plus.

Section 3: Your rights at work

If things are not going well

For many stroke survivors, being back in work after a long time off sick can be difficult, no matter how well-prepared they feel before they go back. They report that tasks that were easy before the stroke become more difficult afterwards, and that regaining skills, confidence and stamina can take a long time.

Don't give yourself a hard time if you feel unable to continue in the job or occupation you were doing before your stroke. You could stay in the same company but in a different role. You could also take some time to look at your options and consider a career change. Explore the different options that are available to you with the help of a Work Coach or Disability Employment Advisor at Jobcentre Plus, or one of the organisations listed in Section 5.

“Not being able to return to my previous job after my stroke allowed me to re-think what I wanted to do with my life. I could have died, but I didn't. I wanted to do something to help others, and that is what I now do.”

Alvin, stroke survivor

Action you can take

Here are some tips if you feel you're not doing well at work or not getting the support you need.

- Speak to your line manager or occupational health advisor. See if they can suggest any further reasonable adjustments.
- Ask for a re-assessment from your NHS occupational therapist or from Access to Work. See Section 5.
- Speak to a trade union representative if you have one, or contact Acas for advice. See Section 5 for contact details.

Stroke is complex. Over time effects may change and some can improve. Sometimes new effects appear. Speak to your occupational therapist or vocational rehabilitation advisor in your local area and explain you need more support at work.

“I needed two occupational therapy assessments. One straight after my stroke and one seven months later when I returned to work and found my problems had changed.”

Catherine, stroke survivor

Section 3: Your rights at work

Can I be dismissed for taking long-term sick leave?

In some cases it will be considered legally 'fair' for an employer to dismiss an employee due to long-term ill health.

In these situations, the employer is first required to consider as many ways as possible to help their employee back to work.

If the employer decides to pursue an ill-health dismissal, they should:

- obtain medical evidence (with the employee's permission)
- arrange an occupational health assessment
- prove that no reasonable adjustments can be made to enable the employee to do their job.

Unfair dismissal

If your employer fails to take the above steps, or if you disagree with your the medical recommendations, or the way your employer has interpreted the recommendations, you may be able to bring a claim for unfair dismissal.

If you think your employer is behaving unlawfully you should seek professional advice. You can get advice from a solicitor, a trade union or an organisation like Acas or Citizens Advice.

If you need to make a claim to an employment tribunal, the time limit for making a claim is three months minus one day from the unlawful act. It's important not to delay in getting advice.

The best way to avoid dismissal is to stay open and honest about your support needs, and keep in contact with your employer about your recovery.

Income protection for self-employed people

If you are self-employed, you might have an insurance policy which offers to provide some kind of payment or income if you are seriously ill. Most policies cover some types of ill health but not others. For example, most cover stroke but many do not cover stress.

Many illness insurance policies have a waiting period before you can make a claim. Contact your policy provider to find out what you are entitled to.

"I didn't realise that my insurance only kicked in after six months of illness. If I'd have gone back to work earlier, I couldn't have claimed anything."

James. stroke survivor

Section 3: Your rights at work

Ending your employment

Redundancy

Employers have to consult with you before making your role redundant. The same arrangements and requirements for redundancy will apply for disabled people as for non-disabled employees.

Employers need to ensure that disabled employees can fully join in the consultation. They must ensure that the person gets the information, fully understands the proposals, and has had the same chance as any other employee to contribute to the consultation process.

This may mean asking for extra time to read and make sense of documents. If your employer has not consulted with you before making you redundant, you should seek the help of an experienced adviser from an organisation such as Citizen's Advice or Acas (see Section 5). You could contact your trade union if you are a member.

You cannot be selected for redundancy based on your disability. This could be grounds for unfair dismissal.

Retirement

If retirement is an option, you will need to think about it very carefully. Many people seek independent financial advice before deciding to retire.

There are different types of retirement, with different benefits. Early retirement may mean you get a smaller pension while medical retirement may not. Your employer and pension scheme officers will be able to help you find out if you are eligible for medical retirement.

Many people enjoy the freedom and relaxation of retirement. But others find they miss the companionship, structure, and routine of working, as well as the income and status. Your decision to retire will be personal to you and your circumstances.

If you choose retirement, think about some activities and things you'd like to achieve, so that your time is enjoyable.



Section 4:

Volunteering and re-training

There are plenty of options available for people who feel they cannot go back to the work they were doing before the stroke. You might decide to look for a new job. You could try volunteering, or re-train for a new career.

Re-thinking your options

If you decide to start job-hunting, see it as an opportunity to choose a new career. Don't feel limited by your previous job roles: think the unthinkable! Play with new ideas about what you wish to do.

It can take a long time to find ideas for a new career and look for jobs, so allow yourself plenty of time.

Some people use a stroke as an opportunity to re-evaluate their lives and this could involve re-training or starting a new career.

“My stroke was a chance to re-evaluate my life. I re-trained as a radiographer after working 60 hours a week in a stressful advertising job. If you want a change in life, you have to just go for it!”

Adrian, stroke survivor

Quick guide to thinking about a career change

- Think about your hobbies, skills and interests. What new job can you see yourself doing? Do you enjoy working with children? Are you a keen gardener? Pick something you enjoy and that interests you.
- There are many types of courses and qualifications available. These include introductory courses or formal qualifications such as an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) or a university degree. You can sometimes do a taster course to see if you enjoy the subject and like the place you are studying in.
- The types of centres that offer qualifications can vary. Most areas have a local college or further education centre. Your local authority will usually list all local college and places where you can study on their website. You can then browse the courses available and contact the course leader directly if you have any questions.
- Be realistic about how frequently you can attend classes. Think about your energy levels and travelling time if you have fatigue or mobility difficulties. You could start with a shorter course and build up to a longer one.

Section 4: Volunteering and re-training

- Most colleges and further education centres offer additional support to disabled students. This can mean a support worker to take notes in class, specialist software, or additional time to complete assignments. When applying for a course, explain you have a disability and ask what the college can offer to support you.

Applying for jobs

There are over 3.4 million disabled people in employment in the UK, and many employers now have a good awareness of disability. But it can be very hard work looking for a new job. Most stroke survivors have said it was their own determination and motivation that landed them a job so be patient, proactive and persistent. When applying for jobs, always tailor your CV to the specific job you are going for.

Disability Confident scheme

The Disability Confident scheme means that an employer is taking positive steps to employ disabled people. Employers who join this government scheme are committed to interviewing all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy. You will be considered on your own abilities. The employer also promised to support people with disabilities in the workplace.

Disclosing a disability on a form or at interview

In your application, account for gaps in your employment by explaining when you took time off for rehabilitation and recovery. List any courses or volunteering you did after the stroke.

Remember to focus on your skills, experience and suitability for the job. Be positive and proactive.

At interview, if you feel someone is making assumptions about your disability, ask questions about the role and explain how you will fulfil the duties.

Some employers will have very little experience of working with people with disabilities or health problems. If you are asked about how you would approach tasks, you could mention the ways that you have found to do things. This includes using aids and technology to help you with planning and physical work.

Some people worry that admitting their stroke or disability on an application form will mean employers will not interview them, let alone offer them a job. But this is not necessarily the case.

Section 4: Volunteering and re-training

“The day before my interview I was really stressed as I couldn’t wear high heels like I did before my stroke, or use my right arm to shake hands. I realised that I had to remove embarrassment by explaining I’d had a stroke, and would shake with my left hand.

“I needn’t have worried. They were far more interested in my experience and didn’t pay any attention to my physical problems.”

Sam, stroke survivor

Volunteering

If you don’t feel able to go back into paid work, volunteering can be a great way to keep active and build your confidence.

How volunteering can help you:

- lets you explore new hobbies and interests
- helps build new skills or develop skills you haven’t used in a while
- allows you to meet new people This can help with feelings of isolation many people face after a stroke.

Quick guide to picking the right volunteering opportunity

- Think about your skills and interests. What appeals to you? Are you a keen gardener? Do you like working with the public? Pick something that you enjoy doing and that interests you.
- If you are unable to travel long distances due to fatigue or mobility difficulties, think about what exists in your local area. A list of volunteering organisations is included at the end of this guide.
- Think about how often you would like to volunteer. It can be a good idea to start once a week and build up to more if you feel able to. Think about your energy levels and travelling time. You could start with four-hour shifts and build up to longer periods.
- Ask what training is available. Many organisations have a dedicated volunteer team. As you are giving up your time, you will often be rewarded by training sessions and other volunteer resources.
- Most organisations will reimburse expenses such as lunch and travel.

Section 4: Volunteering and re-training

Things to consider

- It can sometimes take a while to organise a volunteering position. For instance if you are working with vulnerable groups like children, you may need a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (previously Criminal Record Bureau check) which can sometimes take a while to come through.
- Don't lose heart if there are no immediate vacancies. Ask if you can go on a waiting list and be contacted if vacancies come up.
- Be persistent! Approach a few different organisations and you're more likely to have success.

"I had to give up my job as a music teacher after stroke. I was devastated, because teaching was my life. I carried on playing the piano as part of my rehabilitation. I then discovered I loved meeting other stroke survivors and telling them how I dealt with the effects of stroke.

"I started to volunteer with my occupational therapist working on a stroke ward with people who had no speech. Then I became a Stroke Ambassador and now regularly share my story inspiring and motivating others."

Dav, Stroke Ambassador



Section 5:

Where to get help and information

From the Stroke Association

Talk to us

Our Stroke Helpline is for anyone affected by a stroke, including family, friends and carers. The Helpline can give you information and support on any aspect of stroke.

Call us on **0303 3033 100**, from a textphone **18001 0303 3033 100** or email **helpline@stroke.org.uk**.

My Stroke Guide

My Stroke Guide is the stroke support tool and online community from the Stroke Association. Log on at **mystrokeguide.com**.

Talk to others affected by stroke

There may be a stroke group in your local area where you can meet other stroke survivors.

You can meet people on our My Stroke Guide online chat forum at **mystrokeguide.com**, and our Facebook page **Facebook.com/TheStrokeAssociation**.

Call our Helpline or visit **stroke.org.uk/support** for more information on stroke groups and other face-to-face support.

Support with job-seeking and in the workplace

Access to Work

This scheme provides practical advice and funding for disabled people to allow them to find or stay in work. It offers an initial assessment of the workplace and the employee's tasks. The advisor makes recommendations for additional support such as adapted equipment, one-to-one coaching, or a support worker. The scheme can also help with transport to work.

You get a grant to pay for the support you need. The money doesn't have to be paid back and will not affect your other benefits.

Access to work operates in England, Wales and Scotland

Website: gov.uk/access-to-work
Telephone: 0800 121 7479
Textphone: 0800 121 7579

Access to Work (NI) operates in Northern Ireland

Website: nidirect.gov.uk/articles/access-work-practical-help-work

Section 5: Where to get help and information

Acas

Acas provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. If things go wrong they help by providing conciliation to resolve workplace problems.

Acas operates in England, Wales and Scotland.

Website: [acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk)

Fit for Work

Fit for Work offers free and confidential work-related health advice. You can contact them online or by phone. It operates in England and Wales.

Website: [fitforwork.org](https://www.fitforwork.org)

Telephone: 0800 032 6235 (English) or 0800 032 6233 (Cymraeg)

Ability Net

Ability Net provides information and advice on how people can use technology to achieve their goals in work or education. They have developed Clear Talents, a free tool to help you and your employer identify reasonable adjustments.

Website: [abilitynet.org.uk](https://www.abilitynet.org.uk)

Helpline: 0800 269 545

Remploy

Remploy supports people to find sustainable employment in a wide range of roles with many of the UK's top employers from retail and administration roles, to contact centre jobs, warehousing and catering.

Remploy operates in England, Wales and Scotland.

Website: [remploy.co.uk](https://www.remploy.co.uk)

Telephone: 0845 155 2700

Email: info@remploy.co.uk

The Disability Law Service

Provides access to free advice on legal topics, including employment, for people with disabilities and their carers.

Website: [dls.org.uk](https://www.dls.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7791 9800.

Email: advice@dls.org.uk

Section 5: Where to get help and information

Benefits

Disability Rights UK

Information about benefits and government schemes that are available. It also provides disability confidence training for employers.

Website: disabilityrightsuk.org

Telephone: 020 7250 8181

Email: enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org

Direct Gov

This government website presents government services and information in a clear and simple way.

Website: gov.uk

Volunteering

Volunteering at the Stroke Association

Our volunteer roles provide opportunities to make a difference and do something you enjoy. With your support, we can provide peer-to-peer support to stroke survivors, provide vital services, campaign for better stroke care and fund research to find better treatments.

By choosing to give your time, you'll become an essential part of a team committed to preventing strokes and reducing their effect. You can change the lives of those affected by stroke, and it could change your life too.

There are lots of different volunteer roles to choose from, including befrienders, group supporters, drivers and fundraisers. Volunteer opportunities across the UK can be found on our website at stroke.org.uk/volunteering.

If you can't find anything that fits your skills and interests, please contact us and we can talk about what other options might be available for you.

Website: stroke.org.uk/volunteering

Email: volunteering@stroke.org.uk

Do-it Trust

Their website lists hundreds of volunteer opportunities and is easy to search.

Website: do-it.org

Disability Confident

Disability Confident replaces the Two Ticks scheme. Employers can sign up to be Disability Confident. They take part in training and activities to improve their recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. Resources and advice about disability and employment are available on the website.

Website: gov.uk/disability-confident

Section 5: Where to get help and information

Guidance for employers

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

Information for employers about their duties under the law and making reasonable adjustments.

Website:

equalityhumanrights.com

EHRC Information for employers in Scotland

Website: equalityhumanrights.com/en/commission-scotland

Complete guide to stroke for employers

This publication from the Stroke Association gives employers the information they need to understand the needs of someone returning to work after a stroke. It offers practical tips and advice on supporting stroke survivors in the workplace.

Download free: stroke.org.uk

Section 5: Where to get help and information

About our information

We want to provide the best information for people affected by stroke. That's why we ask stroke survivors and their families, as well as medical experts, to help us put our publications together.

How did we do?

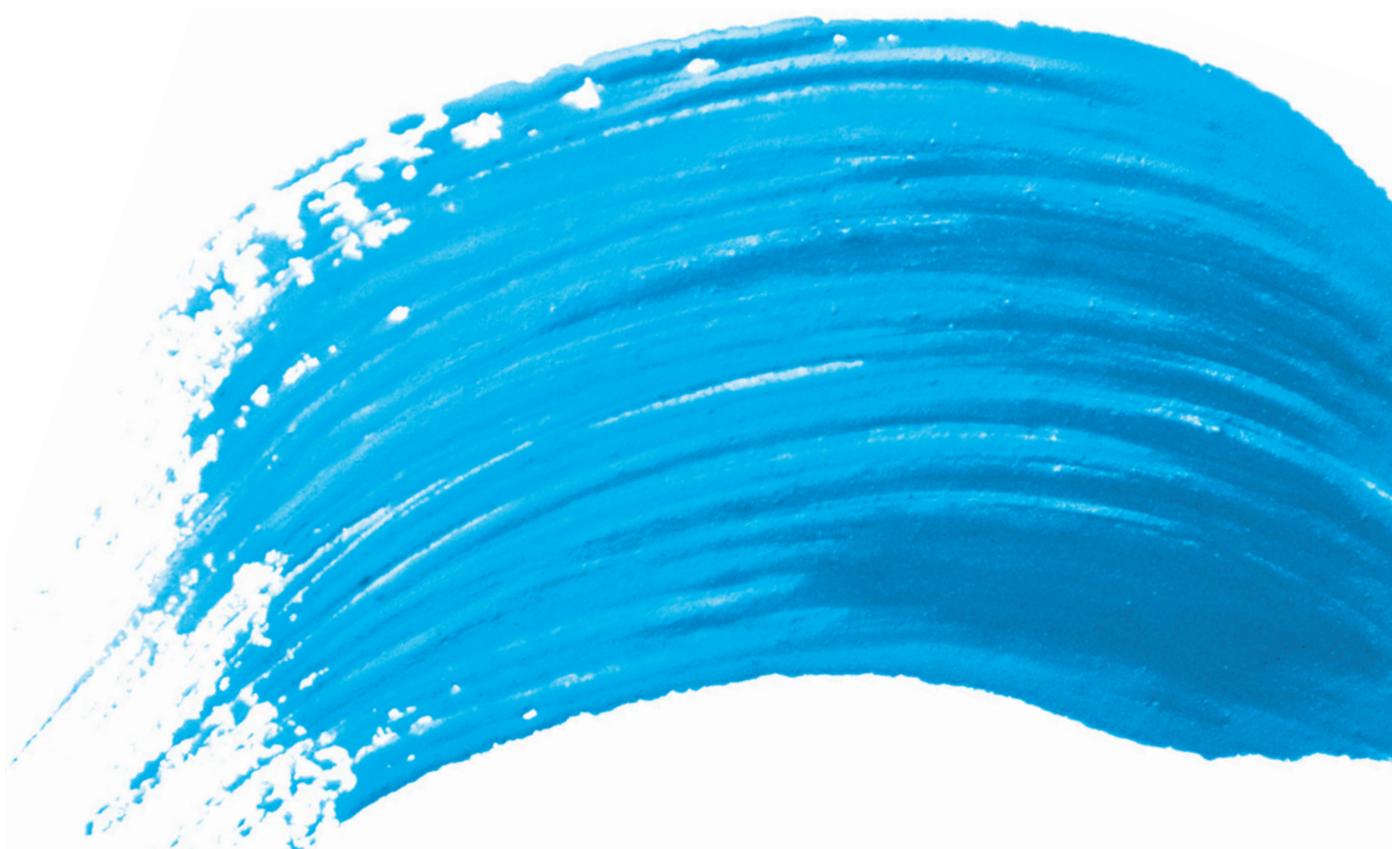
To tell us what you think of this guide, or to request a list of the sources we used to create it, email us at [**feedback@stroke.org.uk**](mailto:feedback@stroke.org.uk).

Accessible formats

Visit our website if you need this information in audio, large print or braille.

Always get individual advice

Please be aware that this information is not intended as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. We strive to ensure that the content we provide is accurate and up-to-date, but information can change over time. So far as is permitted by law, the Stroke Association does not accept any liability in relation to the use of the information in this publication, or any third-party information or websites included or referred to.



We are the Stroke Association

We believe in life after stroke. That's why we support stroke survivors to make the best recovery they can. It's why we campaign for better stroke care. And it's why we fund research to develop new treatments and ways of preventing stroke.

We're here for you. If you'd like to know more, please get in touch.

Stroke Helpline: 0303 3033 100

Website: stroke.org.uk

Email: helpline@stroke.org.uk

From a textphone: 18001 0303 3033 100



We rely on your support to fund life-saving research and vital services for people affected by stroke. Join the fight against stroke now at stroke.org.uk/fundraising. Together we can conquer stroke.

Together we can conquer stroke

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