

stroke.org.uk

Stroke
association

A complete guide to

Work and stroke



Contents

Section 1. While you are off work after a stroke	4
Section 2. Planning your return to work	9
Section 3. Your rights at work	13
Section 4. Volunteering and re-training	19
Section 5. Resources	23

Please note: while we've made every effort to provide the best possible, up-to-date and relevant information this is not intended to be an exhaustive guide. It should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional, specialist advice including from medical specialists or advice regarding employment law or other legal matters.

Acknowledgements

This document was written by Kate Pieroudis, Back to Work Project Manager for the Stroke Association. In collaboration with Rachel Sibson, Chair of the Pan-London Stroke Rehab Group with support from the London Strategic Clinical Network. Special thanks to stroke survivors of the Back to Work Steering Group whose quotes and experiences appear throughout, and to members of the Vocational Rehabilitation Working Party.

The Back to Work Project is part-funded by City Bridge Trust and fundraising by Team Sky, headed up by international rugby star, Michael Lynagh. The Stroke Association retains independent editorial control over all content.



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 think about your return to work after a stroke. It provides information on disability rights at work, and tips for career-changers. 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 received little support so far. 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

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 mild stroke could return to work within a week or two, while others may return after months or a couple of years. There's no set pattern, and no comparison against which you should measure your recovery.

Talk to your doctors, nurses, and therapists about what you can expect. The most important thing is to take things as they come and keep doing your rehabilitation.

Strokes affect people in many different ways and symptoms may change over time. You should return to your GP right away if you experience new symptoms.

Timing

It's important not to rush back to work too quickly following a stroke. For many, financial or other 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 might 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 retain 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 improving with rehabilitation, and that you will contact them again. Ideally, you should specify when you will next be in touch to

Section 1: While you are off work after a stroke

discuss your return. If you need advice, your GP or occupational therapist can help you come up with a time frame.

When you speak with your employer, ask for a copy of their policy for 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. Unfortunately, some may lack the knowledge or experience for supporting people back to work after a stroke and may be unsympathetic.

Try our tips for planning your return to [Your rights at work](#).

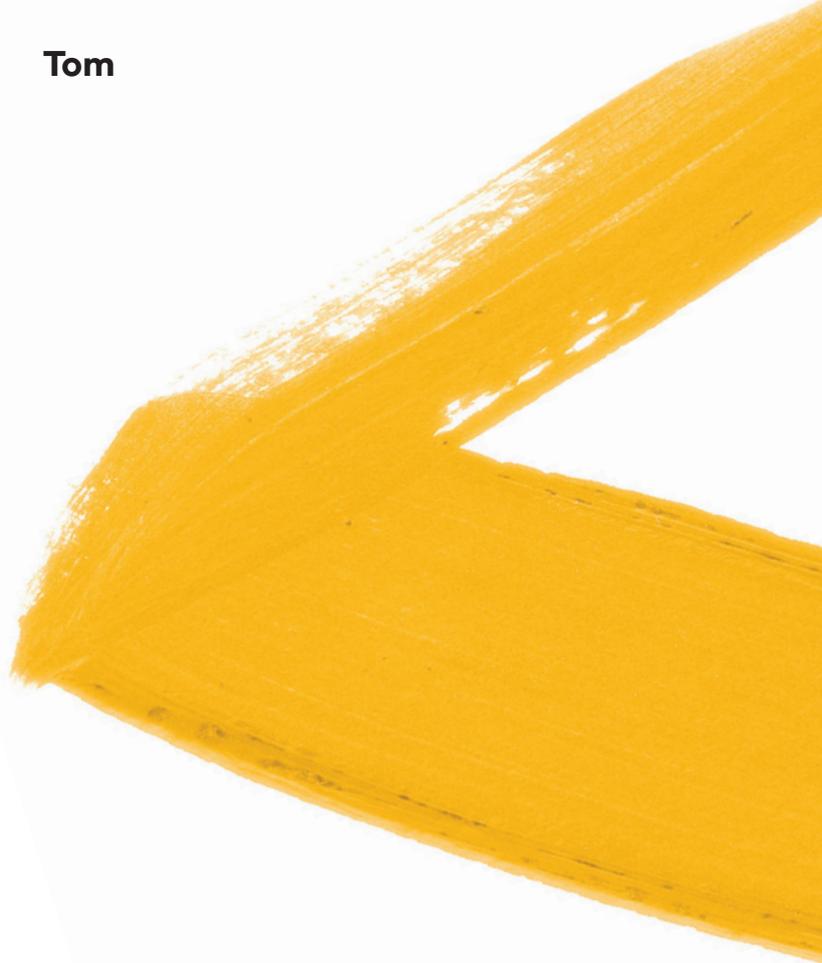
Each time you speak to your employer, only give them the facts they need. Helpful information to give your employer could be:

- 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, 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



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:

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

Changes to personality 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 effects until they are back at work.

The Stroke Association offers advice and information on the effects of stroke turn to Section 5: Resources.



Section 1: While you are off work after a stroke

Emotional and personality changes

A stroke is sudden and shocking, and affects every part of your life. It's a lot to deal with, and everyone deals with it differently. Sometimes, when things seem difficult, anxiety and frustration can make people feel that they're unable to cope or can stop people from returning to work. It is important that you think about whether your expectations, skills and stamina match up to the work you want to do.

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.

Making sure you have 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 – 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 Support Allowance. You may also be eligible for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) which is a benefit 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. If you weren't working before your stroke you may still be entitled to financial support. To find out more read the Stroke Association factsheet Benefits and financial assistance or contact your local Citizens Advice for advice.

Remember that there shouldn't be any embarrassment about claiming benefits. The benefits 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 benefits 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

Publication: A complete guide to stroke for employers

The Stroke Association developed this guidance for employers to help them understand stroke, and support people returning to work following a stroke. It may be helpful to send this guide to your employer. This guide is aimed at employers but there may be information that's useful for stroke survivors and their families as well.

You can find the guide on the our website **[stroke.org.uk](https://www.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: a gradual return to work starting off part time and building up to full time hours, to ease back into work gently.

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 team if there is one in your area. Speak to your occupational therapist or GP to find out more.

A Disability Employment Advisor (DEA) based at a Job Centre Plus might be able to provide additional assistance or advice.

While many DEAs are helpful, this is not the experience of all stroke survivors. If you find that the DEA you are given does not understand your needs, go to the Job Centre Plus manager and

explain the problem. You can ask for a different person to help you.

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.

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. You can try using these headings for your plan:

Section 2: Planning your return to work

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

Review

This is important as it helps you see how you are managing your tasks and also lets 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, with brief notes taken.

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.

"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

Section 2: Planning your return to work

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

Some effects of your stroke get better but new ones could come up. By factoring in time to review how things are going you can flag up if some tasks are unmanageable or when you feel well enough 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 with your manager 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 do this 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

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'.

Section 2: Planning your return to work

“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

Talk to other stroke survivors about going back to work

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 (Section 5: Resources.) You could also speak to your GP to see if there are groups or organisations you could contact locally that allow you to meet other stroke survivors.

“I went on a Stroke Association Confidence Building Session. It was great to meet others under 35 who had a stroke but recovered and went back to work.”

Sandra

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, bullying, and victimisation are also all types of discrimination.

Disability leave

Some employers have a disability leave policy which allows employees to take leave related to their disability, such as for treatment or rehabilitation, and is separate from sickness absence procedures. Unfortunately, disability leave is not enshrined within the Equality Act.

Find out as soon as possible 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 below.

You can find out more about your rights as an employee on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website:
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Am I disabled?

If your stroke resulted in a physical and or mental impairment (including cognitive problems) that has a substantial and long-term effect on your ability to do normal daily activities, you will meet the criteria for having a disability under the Equality Act 2010. This means you are protected from disability-based discrimination. You might not think of yourself as 'disabled' but try to be honest about the support needs you have as a result of the stroke. This could help you access the support that you need.

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. starting work later to avoid rush hour
4. finishing work earlier to avoid rush hour
5. changing tasks to suit what a person can do
6. changing targets or getting support from other colleagues to meet targets.
7. speaking to the staff team on a stroke survivor's behalf to let them know about the stroke.
8. working four out of five days per week
9. getting support with travel to and from work
10. being allowed to take time off to attend hospital appointments
11. regular meetings with your manager to see how the tasks set are going
12. working in a quieter office
13. 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. They were really keen to make sure I had all the support I needed. Once my GP gave me the go-ahead, we came up with a return-to-work plan. 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

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: Resources, or visit www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Fit for Work

This organisation can help you plan for the return to work. It offers advice and support from occupational health specialists. You will be assigned a case manager who can also work with your employer and agencies such as Access to Work on your behalf. See the Resources section at the end, or visit www.fitforwork.org

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. Now might be a good 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 Disability Employment Advisor (DEA) or the organisations listed Section 5: Resources.

Speak to a trade union representative if you have one. If not, ACAS can help with work-related disputes. See Section 5: Resources for contact details.

“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

Action you can take

Here are some tips if you feel you're not doing well at work or 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 (Section 5: Resources section).

Stroke is complex. Over time symptoms may change, some get better and new symptoms may arise. 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 symptoms had changed.”

Catherine

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 their 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 will need to:

- 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.

If they do not follow these steps, the employee can take the case to an employment tribunal on the grounds of unfair dismissal.

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 sickness policy only kicked in after six months of illness. If I'd have gone back to work after four months (when I felt ready to), I couldn't have claimed anything."

James

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, such as Citizen's Advice.

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

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 1.3 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.

Tip: look out for the Two Ticks



The Two Ticks symbol on a job advert means that an employer is taking positive steps to employ disabled people. Employers who display the symbol are committed to interview 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 promises 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 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 people will have very little experience of working with disabled people. Remove embarrassment

Section 4: Volunteering and re-training

at interview if you have physical disabilities by mentioning you have had a stroke but found alternative ways to do things such as using aids.

Although employers often say that they recruit the best person for the job, regardless of whether that person has a disability, this is not always how stroke survivors see it.

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.

“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

Volunteering

If you don’t feel able to go back to 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, to help deal with feelings of depression and 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 factsheet.
- 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

Section 4: Volunteering and re-training

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.

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 Barring Services (DBS) check (previously Criminal Record Bureau check) which can sometimes cause a delay.
- Don't lose heart if there are no vacancies. Make sure you are put on a waiting list and you will 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



Section 5:

Resources

The Stroke Association

How we can help

Our Stroke Helpline can give you information and support. Whatever your question, we're here to help. We also have lots of information about stroke and its effects on our website.

We can help you to raise awareness of stroke, with information sessions at work. We can also organise a Know Your Blood Pressure event at your workplace. These are informal, fun events that take people's blood pressure and inform them about what they can do to reduce their risk of stroke.

Stroke Helpline: 0303 3033 100

Email: info@stroke.org.uk

Website: stroke.org.uk

Stroke Association publications

The Stroke Association publishes factsheets on all aspects of stroke.

Titles include:

- Problems with memory and thinking
- Fatigue after stroke
- Stroke in people of working age
- Communication problems after stroke
- Depression and other emotional changes
- Occupational therapy after stroke
- Benefits and financial assistance

To order print copies of all our factsheets or download pdfs, visit stroke.org.uk

Back to Work Project (London only)

This project works with both employers and employees who are based in London, to make sure that stroke survivors stay in work, make the best possible recovery and continue to develop. We can offer guidance and advice and employees can access one-to-one tailored support and workshops on confidence building and stress relief.

If you are based in London, contact Kate Pieroudis, our Back to Work Project Manager:

Tel: 020 7940 1353 or 07702976569

Email: kate.pieroudis@stroke.org.uk

Section 5: Resources

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: www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Access to Work (NI) operates in Northern Ireland

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

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)

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

Fit for Work

Fit for Work supports you in work and if you're off sick by offering free and confidential work-related health advice. It can refer you to an occupational health professional if you have been, or are expected to be, off sick for four weeks or more.

Speak to your employer or GP about being referred to Fit for Work.

Fit for Work operates in England and Wales.

Website: www.fitforwork.org

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

Section 5: Resources

Work Choice

Work Choice aims to help people with disabilities whose needs cannot be met through other work programmes, Access to Work or workplace adjustments. This might be because you need more specialised support to find employment or keep a job once you have started work.

This scheme operates in England and Wales.

Website: www.gov.uk/work-choice

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: www.remploy.co.uk

Telephone: 0845 155 2700

Email: info@remploy.co.uk

Benefits

Disability Rights UK

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

Website: www.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: www.gov.uk

Section 5: Resources

Volunteering

The Stroke Association

Choosing to donate your time to us means you will become an essential part of a team committed to preventing strokes and reducing their effect through providing services, campaigning, education and research.

There are lots of different volunteer roles to choose from including; befrienders, drivers or fundraisers.

The role descriptions for our most popular opportunities can be found on our website:
stroke.org.uk/take-action/volunteering/what-roles-are-there

We often have other opportunities to get involved with special projects or pieces of work.

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

To find out what is available in your local area please visit **stroke.org.uk**

Do-it Trust

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

Website: www.do-it.org

Other organisations and guidance for employers

Equality and Human Rights Commission

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

Website:
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Information for public sector employers in Scotland:

Website: equalityhumanrights.com/en/commission-scotland

Recruitment and disabled people

The government has produced a guide on recruiting and working with disabled people.

Website: www.gov.uk/recruitment-disabled-people

Section 5: Resources

We're committed to providing 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 when we put our publications together.

To find out more about this or request a list of sources used to create this guide visit **stroke.org.uk/providing-high-quality-information**



How did we do?

To tell us what you think of this guide email, us at **feedback@stroke.org.uk**



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: info@stroke.org.uk

From a textphone: 18001 0303 3033 100



The Stroke Association is a charity.

We rely on your support.

Text **STROKE 5** to **70300** to donate **£5**.

100% of your donation goes to the Stroke Association.

Find out how your support helps at

stroke.org.uk/savelives

Together we can conquer stroke

© Stroke Association 2016

Version 1 Published: July 2016

Next review: September 2018

Item code: **A01F45CG**

