

Social Impact Report

2021





WE HELP YOUNGER STROKE SURVIVORS AND THEIR FAMILIES TO RECLAIM THEIR LIVES

Different Strokes is an organisation that is run by younger stroke survivors for younger stroke survivors. Our beneficiaries are at the heart of our decision-making process, with approximately 50% of our staff and trustees themselves being stroke survivors.

WE UNDERSTAND BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN THERE!



We know that peer support is vital to enable stroke survivors to maximise their recovery, and we recognise that stroke survivors and family members are the experts in stroke recovery and rehabilitation with first-hand knowledge of the issues and challenges facing families after stroke.

Introduction



The Year We Stayed at Home

2020 was, for all of us, a year like we have never experienced before. For the majority of the year, we stayed at home, and this meant that the way we worked was fundamentally different from how we have worked previously. A number of our staff were furloughed or part-furloughed for long periods, with all other staff working from home.

Nevertheless, our commitment to supporting working-age and younger stroke survivors remained unchanged, and we introduced new activities to enable us to do this.

A GLANCE AT SOME OF OUR WORK IN 2020

To help support survivors physical recovery we introduced daily online exercise sessions and delivered 159 sessions throughout 2020

Our online support community increased by 11% to 5,700 members

Our online following increased by 16% across all social media platforms, to 20,000 followers

To reduce isolation we introduced fortnightly zoom chats for stroke survivors and created 'stroke survivor in lockdown' videos

We launched online tai chi sessions to help with stress & fatigue

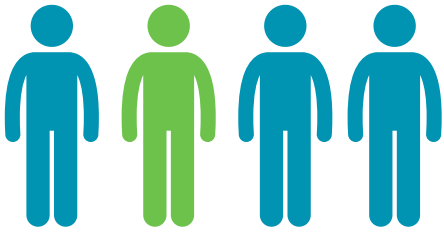
We held a virtual conference with a range of experts and with the aim to empower survivors to take charge of their recovery



Despite being unable to run physical fundraising events, we remain in a very healthy financial position thanks to individual donations, grants for new activities, and online fundraising events.

WHY DOES DIFFERENT STROKES EXIST?

THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 100,000 STROKES A YEAR



Around 1 in 4 strokes happen to people of working age in the UK

ACCORDING TO OUR 2021 SURVEY...

- 86% of younger stroke survivors suffer from fatigue
- 60% have restricted mobility
- 56% have memory problems
- 50% feel unable to work
- 45% suffer from depression

THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON STROKE SURVIVORS

ACCORDING TO THE STROKE ASSOCIATION'S RECOVERIES AT RISK REPORT RELEASED IN 2020:

39% of stroke survivors who had a stroke in 2020 felt they had not received enough rehabilitation therapies

45% of stroke survivors report feeling abandoned after discharge from the hospital

Around half of stroke survivors have had therapy appointments or home care visits cancelled or postponed in 2020

77% of carers and family members have been providing more care during lockdown

41% of stroke survivors have worried more about their finances and employment during the pandemic, particularly those of working age.

WHAT DO THE PEOPLE WHO USE OUR SERVICES THINK OF US?

IT IS IMPORTANT TO US THAT WE KNOW HOW WE ARE DOING SO EVERY YEAR WE CONDUCT A SURVEY OF OUR BENEFICIARIES TO FIND OUT.

92%

OF STROKE SURVIVORS RATE THEIR OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF DIFFERENT STROKES AS EXCELLENT OR GOOD.

Our 2021 beneficiary survey told us that due to the support of Different Strokes:

- 72% of survivors have a better understanding of life after stroke
- 70% understand the invisible aspects of stroke better
- 57% feel better able to share their experiences with other stroke survivors
- 48% of family, friends, and carers feel better able to support a stroke survivor

WE WORK HARD TO SPEND FUNDS SENSIBLY. WE CALCULATE HOW EFFECTIVELY WE ARE MEETING THIS AIM THROUGH SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI) METHODOLOGY.

**FOR EVERY £1
INVESTED WE
PROVIDE £4 OF
BENEFIT TO OUR
BENEFICIARIES**



A GLANCE AT OUR SUPPORT SERVICES IN 2020

We have a team of three part-time staff who use their experiences as stroke survivors to provide peer support services via phone and email.



382

SURVIVORS SUPPORTED BY PHONE

724

SURVIVORS SUPPORTED VIA EMAIL

16,315

PEOPLE ACCESSED INFORMATION
PACKS ON OUR WEBSITE



"I was feeling really down until I spoke to a lady at Different Strokes. Just one hour on the phone and I felt so much better. My stroke was three years ago, and I finally spoke to someone who knew what I was talking about. None of my friends or workmates understood what having a stroke means. I felt like I was standing behind a black curtain on a stage alone. Now the curtains have been pulled back to reveal I'm in a massive theatre and everyone is like me. It also helps to look at all the posts on the online support group. Talk to the charity, they help."

ONLINE EXERCISE CLASSES

When Covid 19 struck we tasked ourselves with a simple aim – to evolve our services to ensure that we could still provide the best possible support to stroke survivors.

In early May 2020, we launched online exercise sessions every weekday – delivered by qualified instructors experienced in working with stroke survivors.



159

SESSIONS DELIVERED IN 2020

92,000

VIDEO VIEWS IN 2020

"My husband John does the Level 3 exercise session every day. It's the best and most consistent rehab exercise he's had since his stroke."



"So pleased to find exercises that really fit my needs and ability."



TEEN AND YOUNG ADULT BEFRIENDING SERVICE

In early 2020 we launched our Teen and Young Adult Befriending Service, which is open to 16–25-year-old stroke survivors living in the UK. We recruited five young people, all of whom had a stroke themselves before the age of 25, to be available to offer 1:1 support and advice by telephone or Zoom to other young stroke survivors. One of our befrienders is Ailie:

MEET AILIE



"I know first-hand how hard it is to recover from a stroke having had one myself aged 21. I feel very passionate about improving the care available to stroke survivors, particularly those of a young age.

During my rehabilitation, I was almost always surrounded by older people, During one of the physio courses I was paired with someone my age for the first time – I felt far more comfortable in these sessions as there was a much stronger sense of belonging. That is the kind of belonging I wish to be a part of creating for future younger stroke survivors!"



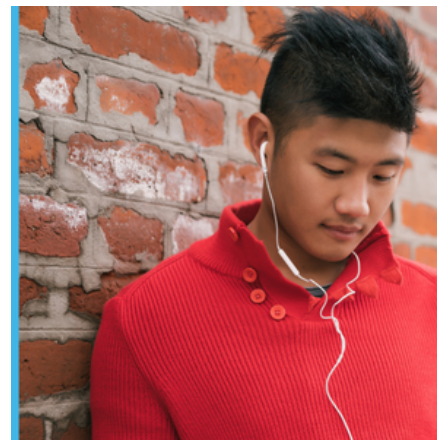
"I REALLY WANT TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THAT SUPPORT TO SOMEONE AND GIVE THEM THAT UNDERSTANDING THAT I WISH I HAD HAD."

WHAT DO THE PEOPLE WHO USE THIS SERVICE THINK OF IT?

IN DECEMBER 2020 AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR EVALUATED THIS SERVICE, AND SOME OF THE FEEDBACK IS BELOW:

"My befriender gave me hope and understanding that there is life beyond stroke and that it was possible to move on after my stroke."

"My befriender helped me focus on me and my recovery and restart my life again."



"Talking to my befriender and sharing our own experiences helped me to make decisions about my future and to be patient."

" My befriender really understood me unlike other people who had not had a stroke; she really got me and gave me validation."



OUR ONLINE PEER SUPPORT COMMUNITY

Peer support is when people use their own experiences to help each other.

For many years our Facebook group has been a safe space for stroke survivors to share their concerns and celebrate their successes with other stroke survivors. In 2020, this became more important than ever before, as the ability to engage with other survivors online offered a real lifeline:

92%

**OF STROKE SURVIVORS RATE OUR ONLINE
SUPPORT GROUP AS EXCELLENT OR GOOD.**



"Different strokes had been a lifeline for us. We've learned so much and been inspired by the people on the Facebook group. The charity is so positive. The exercise videos are brilliant. The information available is easy to access and relevant."

88%

**OF CARERS & FAMILY MEMBERS RATE OUR
ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP AS EXCELLENT
OR GOOD.**



"I am new to this as a carer for my husband who is still in the hospital. I'm overwhelmed by it all in terms of what's next and it's scary! The one thing that's helped me the most is Different Strokes. I feel relaxed to ask questions that sometimes you feel daft in asking so thank you for this amazing support! I look forward to helping put something back too when I'm in a routine with my husband."

VIRTUAL PEER SUPPORT MEETINGS

Our online networking meetings provide a safe space for stroke survivors to talk with other stroke survivors about whatever issues are of most concern to them.

We run these sessions twice a month and stroke survivors are split into small groups of around 5-6 people, each with a facilitator. No matter what comes up the feedback remains the same – "it is so nice to speak to people that are coping with similar issues and understand how I feel".

M E E T K A R L



"After my stroke, I felt like a fraud as all of my struggles were hidden, so avoided any local groups because of this. When I found out about the DS zoom networking sessions, I decided to give it a go, and I haven't looked back!

It's been amazing connecting with other stroke survivors, being able to share experiences and learn new helpful ways to manage my stroke. I have enjoyed it so much I have now become a facilitator for the zoom sessions which has given a new sense of purpose."



"BEING ABLE TO TALK TO OTHERS HAS BEEN A GREAT FORM OF THERAPY FOR ME."

Partnership working and collaborations



We have always recognised the value of working in partnership, and we are always keen to collaborate with other organisations where we have the mutually beneficial aim of supporting stroke survivors. Over the past 18 months we have:

Entered a partnership with Bolt Burdon Kemp solicitors, which has seen them part-sponsor our befriending service and agree to sponsor a future conference of ours

Worked in collaboration with Gripable, who sponsored a recent newsletter

Continued our partnership with Gore, who have a sponsored page on our website

Continued our partnership with Irwin Mitchell solicitors, who have a sponsored page on our website

Worked in partnership with Chest Heart Stroke Scotland (CHSS) and Northern Ireland Chest Heart Stroke (NICHSS) to benefit from funding from Scotmid

Worked closely with Savills Oxford Summertown as their Charity of the Year

Collaborated with other companies who advertised in our newsletter, such as AliveCor, ALLM, Dorset Orthopaedic, PhysioFunction, Revitalise, Quest 88 and FK Pro.

Liaised with Plus Mortgages about providing affordable life insurance for stroke survivors

Worked with Medical Travel Compared to provide affordable holiday insurance for stroke survivors

Received a very generous one-off donation from Percy's Pals

Benefitted from grants from 39 charitable trusts and foundations



If you are interested in working in partnership with us please contact us at info@differentstrokes.co.uk



2021 AND BEYOND

OUR FUTURE STRATEGY

While the world still feels uncertain, we are continuing to look ahead at Different Strokes and we are in the process of forming our strategy for 2022 – 2024.

In our 2021 beneficiary survey, the two most popular answers for future priority areas for Different Strokes were identified as:

- **Increasing awareness of Different Strokes among healthcare professionals**
- **Increasing awareness of younger age strokes among the general public**

Based on this feedback, we plan to grow, support more people, and increase our public profile. Our strategy is therefore likely to cover the areas of:

- Further raising awareness of younger stroke and enhancing our profile
- Making our services more accessible, in more formats, to all younger stroke survivors
- Increasing our partnership work and collaborations
- Developing new projects to support specific groups of stroke survivors

For the remainder of 2021, we will be refining our strategy and ensuring that it is ambitious and achievable. Most of all, we will ensure that everything that we plan comes under one central ambition: To make younger stroke a priority.

Thank You

FROM RANJ PARMAR, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

It's a real privilege to be the Chair of the Board of Trustees for Different Strokes. As a stroke survivor myself, at the age of 39, I know what it's like to have your life turned upside down without warning, and how important it is to have the support of other people who have been in a similar position - this peer support is incredibly valuable during the various stages of recovery and rehabilitation.

This is what we do at Different Strokes – by helping younger stroke survivors reclaim their lives through active peer support and independent recovery.

Over the past 12 months, we have further enhanced our services and helped people in a variety of ways – through local groups, online, by telephone, and through written resources. Soon after COVID restrictions were put in place, we quickly changed our whole strategy and moved the majority of our services online. This was essential as one of the recurring issues stroke survivors feel is isolation. During the pandemic, isolation was at new and unprecedented levels, and as a charity we recognised this and adapted our services, ensuring we were there for stroke survivors and people touched by stroke.



I'm very proud of our achievements but remain acutely aware that we can't achieve anything in isolation. I'd, therefore, like to give a huge thank you to:

- All our volunteers for the thousands of hours they give each year supporting stroke survivors
- Everyone who has undertaken an event for us, to raise funds or volunteer their time
- The many charitable trusts and foundations that have supported us this year
- Our corporate supporters
- Anyone who has donated funds to support our work
- Our fantastic team of staff and volunteers at our head office and up and down the country
- **And most of all, our family of stroke survivors... for all the support that you give each other**





GET IN TOUCH



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Different Strokes Charity



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