



Social Impact Report 2021

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WHO ARE WE?

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



WE UNDERSTAND BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN THERE!

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

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“The opportunity to chat with like-minded people in the virtual meetings who have gone through similar experiences is invaluable. I think the sessions are great. The space is private and no one judges. THANK YOU so much for this!”



Sarah, stroke aged 44

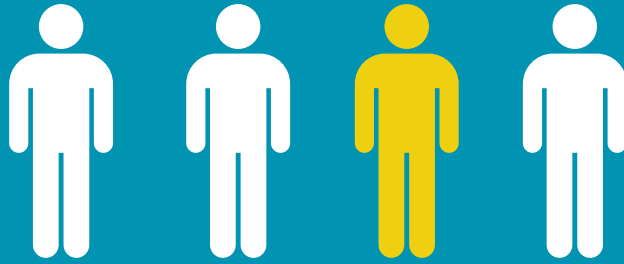
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“Different Strokes has allowed me to not only express how I feel when I’ve wanted to, but also for me to hear that other people feel how I do. Having someone to listen, who has been through the same thing, has made a huge difference to me.”



Georgia, first stroke aged 19

There are approximately 100,000 strokes per year in the UK.



Around 1 in 4 strokes occur in people of working age.

Each year we conduct a survey of our beneficiaries with two key aims:

- Identifying the main issues that younger stroke survivors face.
- Understanding how effective our current services are for the community we serve.

Our survey showed that of the younger stroke survivors who took part:

81% are living with fatigue
52% have restricted mobility
49% have issues with their memory
42% are unable to work
37% are living with depression



We asked survivors and their families how our services had benefited them:

73% felt they understand the invisible aspects of stroke better, such as fatigue, anxiety and depression

56% of family, friends and carers felt better able to support a stroke survivor

53% of family, friends and carers have a better understanding of the effects of a stroke

53% felt able to share their experiences with other stroke survivors

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2021?

2021 was a very stable year for Different Strokes. At the start of the year, we were very much operating under COVID-19 regulations. A number of our staff team were fully or partly furloughed, but we continued with the activities that we introduced in 2020. As the year went on we were gradually able to return to normal operations, with all staff returning to their core hours. This has given us a good foundation for some exciting developments in 2022 and beyond.



WHAT RESOURCES DID WE HAVE?



**4.9 FTE
STAFF**



**£272,220
SPENT**



We work hard to spend funds sensibly and for every £1 invested we provide £4 of benefit to our beneficiaries.

Taken from the Different Strokes SROI calculations 2021

Some highlights from 2021:



We supported 1,687 people affected by stroke through our helpline and email service



We produced 292 free to access online exercise and tai chi sessions, to help support physical recovery



We held a week-long virtual conference to inspire and support stroke survivors to reclaim their lives



We formed a Black and Asian Stroke Survivor focus group with the aim of reaching a more diverse range of stroke survivors

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



90%

of stroke survivors would rate our services as excellent or good

84%

of family, friends & carers would rate our services as excellent or good

96%

of healthcare professionals would rate our services as excellent or good

“

Different Strokes has been an inspiration for me to keep going!



Janet, stroke aged 39

“

“I like to see the pictures and videos of others as it is so encouraging. Either I've been there or hope to get there. It helps to know that there are people out there that will totally understand and not judge you. They will give you encouragement to try and they realise that even the smallest of steps is a win



Angela, stroke aged 52

PEER SUPPORT IS CENTRAL TO EVERYTHING THAT WE DO AT DIFFERENT STROKES.

Our private Facebook support group for stroke survivors and close family members has grown to over 6,300 members. This is a great forum for people to express their concerns, receive support and advice from other survivors, read and share experiences, and celebrate the successes, challenges and milestones along the way.



Our Facebook support group grew by 10% in 2021

“

Finding the Different Strokes Facebook page made me feel less isolated and it helped me to know other people my age were experiencing the same as me. I was 53 and still find it hard to accept what happened to me.”



Jacqui, stroke aged 53

“

Different Strokes Facebook group is a safe space for peer support and it is well run. Thank you for being there when I have felt alone on this journey.”



James, stroke aged 33

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My stroke was 4 years ago and Different Strokes is still an active part of my recovery. The Facebook group is such an amazing resource of knowledge and support. Peer support offers such huge benefits for all. Thank you and keep up the good work.”

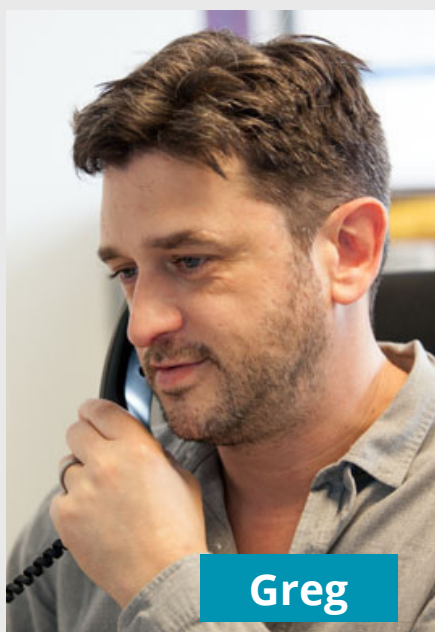


Anonymous

HELPLINE AND EMAIL SUPPORT

A key way that we provide peer support to our beneficiaries is through our telephone helpline. Our three office-based stroke survivors – Greg, Genise, and Sheelagh – are available to provide practical advice, emotional support, and signposting – to any survivor or family member that needs support.

We can also provide support via email, and in 2021 we had our busiest ever year for supporting people through this method.



Greg



Genise

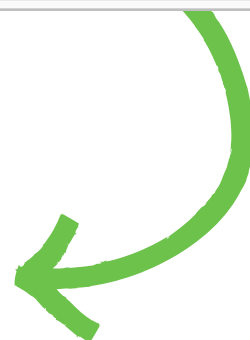


Sheelagh

Sheelagh says:

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"It is a great privilege to be able to talk to and support fellow stroke survivors and their families – I would like them all to know how much they support me too!"



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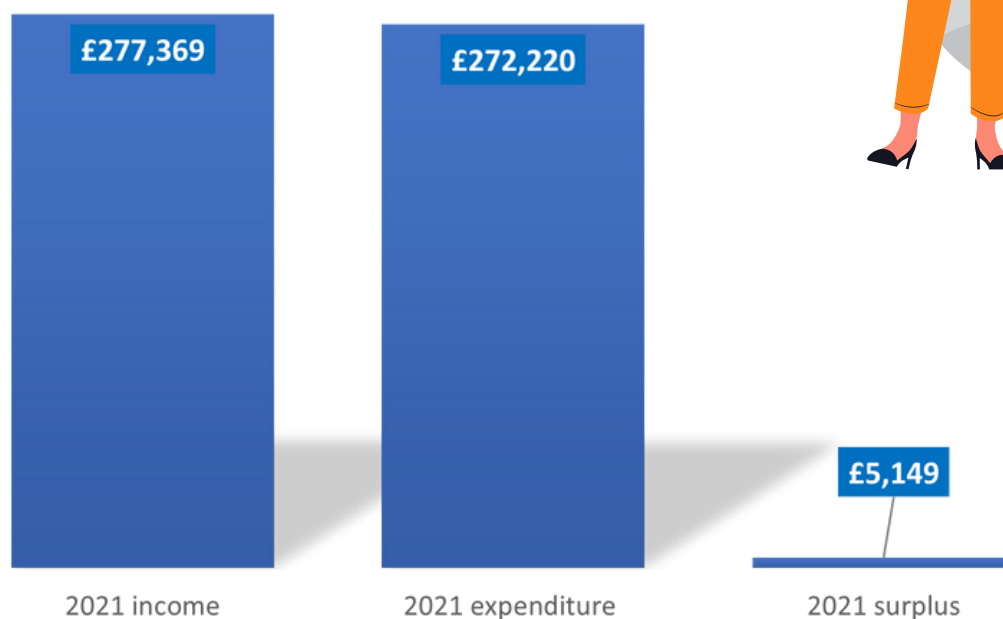
"Different Strokes has been positive for me. It has helped me so much, from the information being readily available, to knowing someone is at the end of the phone. Thank you."



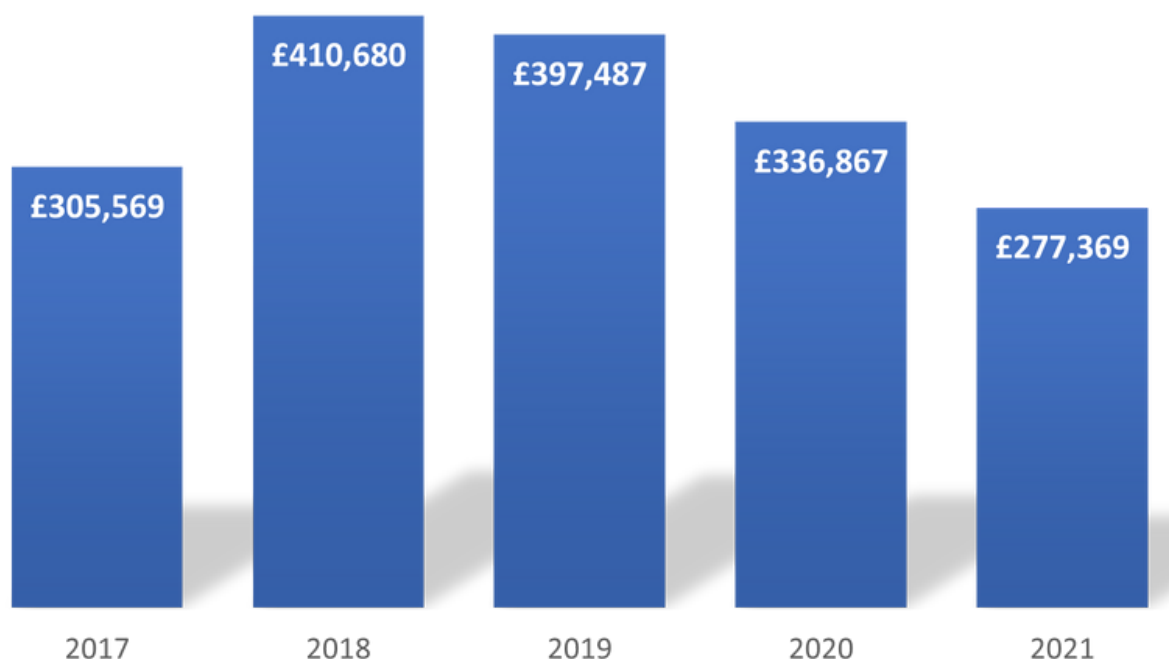
Lisa, stroke aged 44

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2021

INCOME & OUTGOINGS 2021:



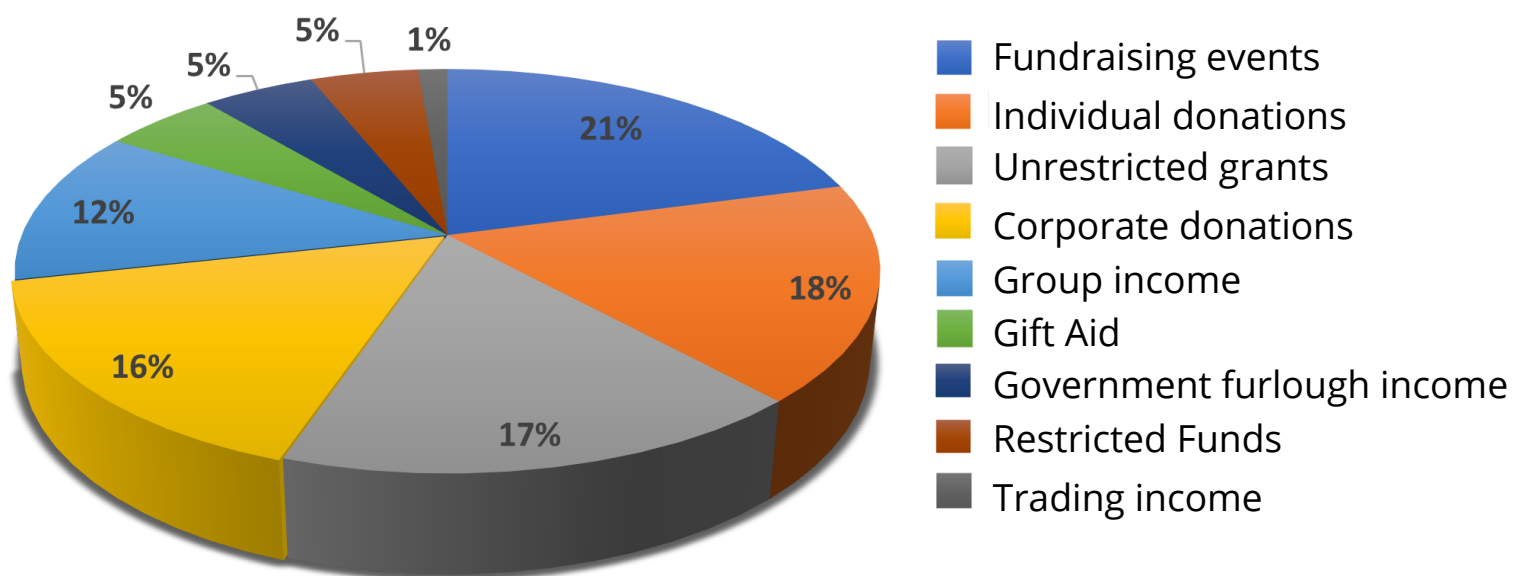
OUR INCOME OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS:



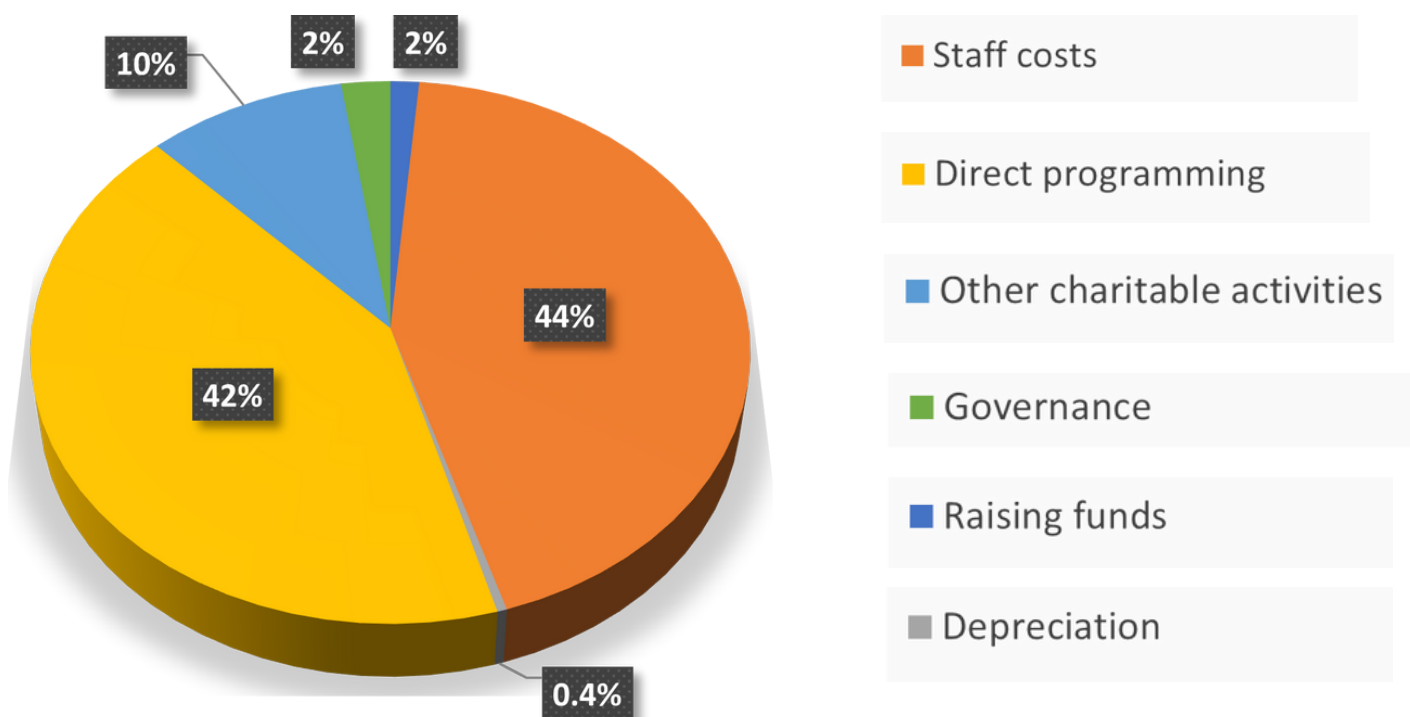
Our income has reduced in the past two years due to Covid. This mostly affected our group's income, as they have not been able to meet for much of this time. We are optimistic that income will increase again in 2022 and beyond.

Despite this, we have managed to increase the services that we provide, and help more stroke survivors than ever.

HOW FUNDS WERE RAISED IN 2021:



WHAT FUNDS WERE SPENT ON IN 2021:



We remain in a very strong financial position. Our reserves policy states that we should maintain a level of free reserves of no less than 6 months' worth of expenditure. On 31st December 2021, we held free reserves of £199,624, approximately 8 months' worth of expenditure.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As we have moved into 2022 we have adopted a new multi-year strategic plan. In broad terms, this plan focuses on five key areas:

- Developing services
- Raising awareness
- Working in partnership
- Developing our staff
- Raising required funds



Here, we look in a little more detail at specific objectives in some of these areas.

Since all stroke survivors are affected differently, we have always sought to provide our services in as many different ways as possible – through face-to-face groups, by phone, via online support, through written materials, via our website and online networking. We recognise that there is still much more that we need to do to ensure that we are inclusive of all stroke survivors. We want to ensure that no one is denied access to the support they need because of the effects of their stroke, culture, or geographical location.

Black and South Asian people are at much greater risk of stroke, with studies indicating that black people are twice as likely to have a stroke as white people and that Black and South Asian people have a stroke at a younger age. These figures have not been entirely reflected amongst the community of stroke survivors that Different Strokes supports; while around 10% of the UK population is of Black or South Asian descent, a recent beneficiary survey showed that only around 6% of respondents are from these communities. We are determined to ensure we are doing all we can to reach and support survivors from this high-risk group.



As a starting point, we established a Black and Asian Stroke Survivors focus group in 2021. The group worked to identify potential barriers that may prevent survivors from these communities from seeking help and they roughly fall into four categories.

- **Lack of awareness**
- **Lack of representation**
- **Lack of information**
- **Social, cultural & language barriers**

The work of this group has been very useful but there is much to do. We need a dedicated staff member to focus on this important work and we are currently recruiting a Project Officer to lead this project.

MEET RICHARD

Richard Djan-Krofa is a stroke survivor, and a Different Strokes trustee. He has been a key figure in our work so far on reaching Black and Asian stroke survivors.

"I am married to Adjoa with three sons. I recently turned fifty and work as a chartered surveyor. I suffered a stroke in 2008, at the age of 36. I spent three months in rehab. Today, I am fully recovered, living with Aphasia and enjoying life, able to talk, and with slight weakness on the right side of my body."



"I was introduced to Different Strokes through a work colleague who is a fellow stroke survivor. After leaving the hospital, I made contact with Different Strokes and requested an information pack and joined the mailing list. I later attended a conference in Milton Keynes where I spoke to members of the team and asked what I could do to help. They were recruiting for a trustee, I applied - the rest is history!"

"After my stroke, I spent 3 months at the Frank Cooksey Rehabilitation Unit, which was located in the London Borough of Southwark. At the time it was mainly used for people under the age of 45 who had had a stroke or brain injury. I believe due to the location the residents were largely Black & Asian. So, when I first became involved with Different Strokes, I was quite surprised that this group was not represented at the meetings & conferences I attended. Particularly knowing that strokes are more prevalent in Black and Asian people."

"Over the years we have seen an increase in Black and Asian survivors getting involved, through various personal and collective initiatives. However, there is still a large number of people who do not know about the services and support that we can offer. This is why I didn't hesitate to become involved in this project. I want to encourage more Black and Asian survivors to become involved and to bring awareness to as many people as possible that Different Strokes exists to be there for them. That they are entitled to access the support and encouragement we can offer, from which I have benefited. To let survivors know that they are not alone and that there are people like them who have been through similar experiences, who are working through their own challenges, but able to provide valuable peer support."

#NotJustTheElderly

Raising awareness that stroke happens to people of ALL ages is central to what we do as a charity. A survey we commissioned in 2019 found that 84% of the general public thought that only 1 in 50 (or less) strokes happened to people of working age. The actual number is around 1 in 4 strokes affects working age people.



To help get this message out there we have recruited a number of volunteer ambassadors up and down the country, who will be representing Different Strokes in their local areas.

A key part of their role will be to work with their local Integrated Stroke Delivery Network (ISDN). The ISDNs were established in 2021, and provide a new model of delivering stroke services designed to deliver better outcomes and more joined-up care. Working closely with the ISDNs gives us a great opportunity to further raise awareness of younger stroke.

We spoke with Priti, a London-based ambassador, to get her thoughts:



"I had a blood clot 10 days after I had my first COVID-19 vaccination. I had no FAST symptoms, but had a general 'body ache' and was losing sensation in my leg which was affecting my balance. On my first A&E visit, I was sent home; around 4 days later I phoned an ambulance again and this time I had a CT scan, which showed that I was clotting. I was then admitted to the hospital for seven days."

RETURNING HOME AFTER A STROKE

"On my return home, I continued to suffer from balance issues and problems with peripheral vision in my left eye. I had significant fatigue.

I wasn't working at the time, so decided not to look for work for a while so I could focus on my recovery. Around 4 months after my stroke, I heard about Different Strokes and I became a member of the Facebook group. It was nice to be able to be in touch with like-minded people. I felt isolated post-stroke, and my family didn't understand what I was going through. It was great to be able to reach out to the Facebook group knowing that people there would understand."

BECOMING AN AMBASSADOR

"A year on, I'm very much living in the moment, but feel very glad that I've been able to reclaim my life. I'm working part-time now, and feel that I'm able to give back in some way, which is why I got involved as a Different Strokes ambassador."

"I work with the London ISDN, which is a huge area! I have attended various meetings with ISDN leads for the local area, stroke consultants and physiotherapists, and discussions have centered on where improvements can be made across the stroke pathway, including post-discharge support. It's been good to be able to input as a stroke survivor; I really feel that my voice has been heard, that all the clinicians take on board my comments, and that I'm able to fully contribute."



LOOKING FORWARD

"I want to continue to work with the London ISDN and see this develop, and I'd like many more stroke survivors to be aware of the support that Different Strokes and other stroke support organisations offer. On a personal note, I want to push my boundaries further... including doing the 2022 Different Strokes abseil!"

We are always working to elevate the voices of younger stroke survivors, and to ensure that those with lived experience of stroke are fully involved in running our services. As you can see we have ambitious plans in the coming years, and although we are a national organisation we have a very small staff team. This means that we are hugely reliant on volunteers like Richard and Priti to support us in all areas of our work. We are so grateful for the support of all our volunteers; without them we simply wouldn't be able to function as an organisation."

Austin Willett, CEO, Different Strokes



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Partnership working and collaborations continue to be of vital importance to Different Strokes.

This takes on many forms, including:



- We partnered with four corporate organisations that have sponsored pages on our website
- GripAble sponsored our Spring 2021 newsletter
- Bolt Burdon Kemp sponsored our 2021 virtual conference
- We created paid-for product reviews, and the results of this we published on our website and on social media
- We were the Charity of the Year of Savills Oxford and Summertown Offices
- We have continued to engage with other charities, including the Stroke Association, Chest Heart Stroke Scotland, Northern Ireland Chest Heart Stroke, and Same You
- We are part of alliances including the Stroke Alliance for Europe (SAFE), The Neurological Alliance and the Medical Technology Group

It is a key part of our forward strategy to develop more relationships with third-party organisations that have similar aims. From charities to commercial organisations and corporates including pharmaceutical companies, we are always keen to collaborate.

A key development for us in 2022 will be working with more organisations that are engaged in stroke research. We are increasingly being approached to support the recruitment of stroke survivors to take part in studies. Such partnerships are fantastic as they ensure that the products and services developed are tailored to the specific needs of stroke survivors, whilst generating funds for the charity and providing an empowering experience for the individuals taking part.



"Bolt Burdon Kemp is proud to be partnering with Different Strokes. The charity provides important and much-needed services and information to younger people who have had a stroke. It's a privilege to be involved with the charity and we are excited to continue developing our relationship for the mutual benefit of our clients."

Laura Barlow, Senior Associate, Bolt Burdon Kemp

THANK YOU ❤️

FROM RANJ PARMAR, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

It continues to be a real privilege to be the Chair of Different Strokes. As a stroke survivor myself, 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.



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.

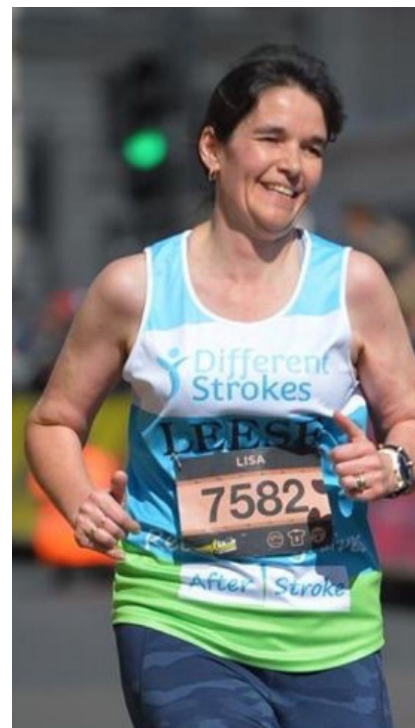
As we started to see COVID restrictions lifted it was important to not rush forwards but to see how vulnerable people (i.e. stroke survivors) felt about society being opened up again. So, with this in mind, we continued our online support but also made sure we were available by being on the phone when needed. This was essential as one of the recurring issues stroke survivors feel is isolation.

I'm hugely proud of our achievements as we continue to 'punch above our weight' but remain acutely aware that we can't achieve anything in isolation.

I'd, therefore, like to say 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 at our head office who continue to excel in everything they do
- Our board of trustees who continue to volunteer their time to help govern and support the charity whilst being in demanding full-time employment
- **And most of all, our family of stroke survivors... for all the support that you give each other**

Ranj x



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