



**Stroke Recoveries at Risk**  
James White, Stroke Association

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## Talk Transcript – James White

Hello, and welcome, wherever you are joining me from. My name is **James White**, and I am the **Head of Advocacy and Campaigns** at the **Stroke Association**. In this session we are looking at our newly released '**Stroke recoveries at risk**' report.

The **report** brought together valuable **patient insights**, as well as the **views** of **clinicians, researchers** and our **own staff** working with those affected by **stroke**. It details how the **pandemic** has affected **stroke survivors**, their **families** and **carers** and includes **key recommendations** for all **UK governments**, as well as **local systems**.

If you haven't already, the **report** is available to read [online](#).

**Who** did we hear from?

We heard from **2,000** people affected by **stroke**! That breaks down to roughly **80%** who are **stroke survivors**, and **20%** who are **carers**. And the responses were proportionate across the UK.

Below, you can see the **breakdown** of **when** they had their **stroke**. It included **5.5% during the pandemic** itself.

#### When stroke survivors had their strokes



- During the pandemic (5.49%)
- January or February 2020 (3.08%)
- 2019 (15.19%)
- 2018 or before (74.76%)
- Don't know (1.49%)

Now, let's look at the **key findings**.

We heard that **almost all aspects** of **stroke care** and **treatment** have been **impacted** by the **pandemic** – including **life after stroke**, **rehabilitation**, **mental health** and **well being**, as well as **calling 999** in the first place.

A look at the **key findings** shows that the pandemic has meant **4 in 10 people** who have had a **stroke this year** feel they **aren't receiving the help and support** needed to rebuild their life after stroke.

In addition, people are worrying more about what the future holds. **7 in 10 stroke survivors** report feeling more **anxious** recently.

And it isn't just stroke survivors themselves. **Over half** of people who are **caring for stroke survivors** say they feel **overwhelmed**.

We also heard that **29%** of people who had their **stroke during the pandemic** **delayed seeking emergency medical attention** because of it.

One area that came through really strongly in the survey responses was the **impact** of the **pandemic** on **stroke survivors** and **carers mental health** and **wellbeing**.

We heard for example, that:

- **Over two thirds** of stroke survivors have felt **more anxious** and **depressed** lately.
- **68%** of **stroke survivors** told us they now feel **more worried** about their **health**, while **69% worry** about what the **future** holds for **them** and their **loved ones**.
- **45%** of all **stroke survivors** now feel less able to cope with the impacts of their stroke, and over **a third** report **feeling abandoned**.

And, the situation is worse for the survivors who had their **stroke during the pandemic**.

- **82%** say they feel **more anxious** and **depressed**, while
- **88%** have **worried** more about their **health**.

The report includes **rich insights** from those **affected by stroke** – including quotes from stroke survivors, their families and carers – as well as several **case studies** that reflect on the **impact the pandemic** has had on **different areas** of the pathway.

Please now let's watch **Peter's story** about how the **pandemic** has **affected his recovery**. Let's listen to [Peter's story](#).

### **Peter, Stroke Survivor:**

Hello, my name is **Peter** and in March **2018** I had a massive **stroke**. It nearly killed me, but I'm glad to say I am here to tell the tale.

Unfortunately the **stroke** meant that I had **lost** the **use** of my **left arm** and **hand** and also I am having to **learn to walk** again.

It's been quite **devastating** and I am not looking forward to the **long-term prospects** of **rehabilitation**.

I need **physiotherapy** for that and had a great **physiotherapist** but unfortunately she had to **return** to the **front line** because of the **pandemic**. I also go to a gym for the disabled and get further physiotherapy there and personal training. This had to close for a few weeks, again because of the pandemic.

The **consequence** of my **stroke** have left me feeling very **depressed** at times. I was looking forward to my long-term project following my early retirement and I used to really enjoy cycling, gardening, and playing the piano, which I can no longer do for obvious reasons. So my **mental health** has really taken a **plummet**.

Fortunately, I've got the **support** of my fantastic partner, family friends, and local people. If I'd not had that, and I needed to access **mental health services**, these are really **constrained** at the moment, because of the **pandemic**, so that would have been quite **difficult** I feel.

The **Stroke Association** have actually done a **study** recently, and from that they've got a number of **recommendations** which they want to **propose** to the **government** through an **open letter**. We'd really like you to **sign that letter** please. And hopefully that will **help me** and **other people like me** to **regain** and **rebuild our lives**. Thank you very much.

## James White:

So, what are we calling for?

We're calling for all **UK governments** to **commit** to the following **recommendations**, including:

- **urgently progressing**, or **committing** to, **national stroke initiatives** and **delivering on commitments** made prior to the pandemic.
- Stroke teams should **follow up** with all **stroke survivors** who had a **stroke this year** to review and **address** their **rehab needs**.
- Health and care systems and local authorities should **prioritise increasing** the **provision** of, and **access** to, **mental health services**.

Alongside these, we also have **specific recommendations** for **England, Wales, Northern Ireland** and **Scotland**.

In short, we hope this report will help with our aim of **improving stroke prevention, treatment** and **care**, and making sure that **stroke** is the **health priority** it needs to be.

So, if you're sat there wondering how you can **help us** out and **take action**. We need your help to make sure the recommendations are heard.

Alongside the report we launched an [Open Letter](#): this calls on **governments** and **local decision makers** across the **UK** to **urgently act** on our **recommendations** in the report.

Please **sign our Open Letter**, and then share the link with your colleagues, friends, families, and members of the stroke community.

And we'd love you to **join us** for our two [Question & Answer sessions](#), so you can ask us any questions you have about the report.

We'd love to hear from you about your **reflections** on it, and if you are **planning** on using the **findings** in your own work.

**Contact us** ([Campaigns@stroke.org.uk](mailto:Campaigns@stroke.org.uk)) to find out more, or to arrange to speak to a member of the Stroke Association team.

**Thank you** for sticking with me to the end, and an additional thanks to my colleagues Jess and Steph for their help getting this ready, as well as the excellent UCL team. Thank you.



Stroke Association

<https://www.stroke.org.uk/finding-support/coronavirus-covid-19-and-stroke>

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