

## **Case study- The Impact of Long Term follow-up after Stroke.**

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In 2008 Wolverhampton commissioned our "Community Stroke Specialist" service to support all stroke patients on discharge from hospital. This was in response to national guidance such as the "National Service Framework for Older People" (2001) and the "National Stroke Strategy" (2007) to provide a named Stroke Care Co-ordinator and single point of contact. On consultation, local service users had also expressed their wish for more long term community support.

We are a small multi-disciplinary team of a Nurse, Physiotherapist and Occupational Therapist and an experienced Support Worker. We review all patients at home within 6 weeks of discharge and then very regularly following this, including their 6 month SSNAP review.

We conduct a multi-faceted holistic assessment of need including medication, health needs, stroke prevention, therapy/rehabilitation needs, mood, cognition, social care needs, driving, work/leisure activities and complete measures of disability (NIHSS and Modified Rankin Score).

We pride ourselves in offering our patients a flexible and easily accessible service, replacing the traditional medical model of a one-off follow up consultant appointment in a hospital clinic setting. This enables us to provide a much quicker review and the ability to action any issues in a much more timely manner. For example, if they require intervention for blood pressure or medication this can be addressed swiftly. Two of our team are also non-medical prescribers which has supported this and reduced the need for an unnecessary wait for a GP or consultant appointment. Through our knowledge of local services, we are able to signpost people onto appropriate services and we encourage and support our patients to self-manage their condition. We remain their single point of contact, supporting their journey and helping them to restore occupational balance in their life after stroke.

Our commitment to our multi-disciplinary and holistic care approach is reflected in the positive feedback from our patient satisfaction questionnaires, including comments such as "provide support and encouragement", "received tremendous support, advice and practical help and confidence in extremely difficult times", "I felt supported through stressful times", "she put me in touch with people we did not know about" and that "she knows my needs".

Tony was 42 when he had an ischaemic stroke. Prior to the stroke, Tony felt he was relatively healthy and so his stroke was completely unexpected. Tony was working as a taxi driver and is married with two teenage children. Tony was referred to us on discharge from hospital and we continue to review him regularly. We have provided education on medication, healthy lifestyle, blood pressure checks, supported him in managing his newly diagnosed diabetes, provided information and support regarding finances and benefits and

provided support around his anxieties with his recovery. Tony has always championed the rehabilitation services he has received at West Park Hospital who he says have been invaluable to him. We have also sourced a “Life After Stroke” grant from the Stroke Association ([www.stroke.org.uk/finding-support/life-after-stroke-grants](http://www.stroke.org.uk/finding-support/life-after-stroke-grants)) to fund a disabled persons season ticket for his football team Wolverhampton Wanderers.

At Tony’s 6 month review we completed all of the SSNAP data and established that he had received an in-depth cognitive assessment and that no deficits were identified. However, Tony reported that the DVLA had recently declined his application to return to driving, based on possible memory issues. He described driving as very important to him to feel useful to his family and to give him a sense of purpose, freedom and personal wellbeing. Working together, Tony, our team and his consultant were able to provide additional information to the DVLA which has allowed him to return to driving.

Our service will continue to support Tony and address other unmet stroke related needs as they arise over the coming months and years. Despite only being involved with Tony for relatively short space of time this case study highlights the positive impact our service has already had on Tony’s quality of life and ultimately his return to life after stroke.