

We've changed our name!

As of 25th January 2018, Bristol Area Stroke Foundation officially changed its name to Bristol After Stroke. Alongside this, we have a new logo and radically revamped our look and style.

We believe our new name, logo and look help to reinforce our identity as an independent local charity for people affected by stroke. We aim to be here for the ongoing needs and aspirations of people as they recover and adapt to life after stroke, and we want to do more for more people. So, we need our identity to work harder for us.

We hope that you like what we've done!



35th Birthday Celebrations

Not only have we changed our name this year, but 2018 also marks our 35th birthday as a charity.

To celebrate we held an evening reception on 25th January, where we welcomed some very special guests – people who have benefited from our activities and services, people who have supported us with fundraising, and our dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers and staff. We enjoyed drinks and nibbles and listened to the great things people have experienced with us, and to our aspirations for the next 35 years.

We're a sociable bunch!



Please 'like' us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter to keep up to date with our news and information.

Our website  www.bristolafterstroke.org.uk has information about stroke and our services and links to further support



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Page 11 Join Len in the Bristol 10k and support Bristol After Stroke



Wellbeing Day - what we learned

Different Strokes got the day off to an uplifting start with an exercise taster, showing that it is possible to carry on exercising even after stroke and from a seated position. Overall, it was a hugely informative day hopefully offering an insight into varied topics. Did you know for example:

- That it is predicted that in Bristol 40,000 people have undiagnosed high blood pressure and high blood pressure is a key risk factor for stroke?
- That falls are the most common complication

after stroke with 7% having a fall within the first week after stroke and up to 73% falling within the first year?

- That there is a Sustainable Transformation Plan for stroke in development by the local NHS that is looking at how improvements can be made to stroke prevention and management? Once complete it will go out for full public and patient consultation
- Bristol After Stroke supported over 700 people last year?

What happens to communication when we get stressed?

Speech and Language Therapist, Sophie Cottrell, on her research project into Aphasia and Anxiety and what she discovered.

In 2017 I went to visit the Fishponds group to talk to people about my research.

My Questions:

I asked people with aphasia:

- What makes their communication worse?
- Does stress or anxiety affect their communication?
- Have they found anything that helps?
- Has anyone heard of or tried **mindfulness**?

I went along to other groups, including the first Bristol After Stroke 'Mindfulness' session, and also spoke to some people one to one about these questions.

Some Answers:

People told me a number of things that make communication worse:

- Tiredness
- Illness or pain
- Background noise
- Different emotions – anxiety and stress but also feeling frustrated, afraid, angry or tense

Some people said that other stroke symptoms come back or get worse when they are anxious too, for example their affected arm getting tighter or losing their balance more.



All these were fascinating facts that came out of the presentations given on the day. Dr Ann Sephton described the local Sustainability & Transformation Plan for stroke, Dr Jacob Lee gave advice on blood pressure management, and Hanneljje Lowe talked about the risk of falls after stroke and how to prevent them.

Bristol After Stroke gave a review of the year's activities and achievements, and former Stroke Coordinator, Hannah Stott gave an update on her research into bodily feelings and discomfort after stroke.

The main highlights, however, were the personal stories of stroke affected people. People like Jerry Daly and Jenny Smith who gave a moving account of their struggles with aphasia and how our Conversation Group helped them. Eddie Ruskin talked about his stroke experience, how Bristol After Stroke's Next Steps physiotherapy programme had helped him, and how this had inspired him to fundraise.

On a final note we'd like to say thank you to all our volunteers who helped on the day, and the St Monica Trust and South Gloucestershire Council for all their support without whom this event could not happen.

What helps?

Many people find that using a card or wearing a badge to tell other people about their aphasia helps. It can help other people understand and be more patient. Some people talked about planning, preparing and maybe rehearsing their words before they get to the stressful situation.

A few people had heard of and tried **mindfulness**; not everyone found it easy, but some found it helpful.

I would like to say a big THANK YOU to all the people who have helped me so far.

What next?

I am still working on this project and thinking about mindfulness for people with aphasia. If anyone would like to be involved, to share their experience or give their opinion, I would be really happy to hear from you.

**Sophie Cottrell, Speech and Language Therapist
Bristol Speech and Language Therapy Research
Unit, North Bristol NHS Trust**

☎ 0117 414 3951 / 0117 340 8525

✉ sophie.cottrell@nbt.nhs.uk



Sarah's story

"The right side of my body felt limp and my leg gave out, so my husband drove me to A&E. I was in hospital for three months and when I came out I had lots of professional therapy for six weeks and then it stopped – I was on my own. I was lucky as, even though my husband was at work, my sisters would come round once or twice a week to help me. Eventually I went back to work, but I couldn't do my previous job as I couldn't drive so eventually I retired early due to ill health. I then started to go Bristol After Stroke's Fishponds Stroke Group and now I volunteer there.

I still feel that things are improving - over the last year I can walk further faster, go on the bus, do shopping, and even peel a potato! My most recent achievement was making a cake. I feel as though I continually improve as time goes on and I have the determination. There's hope for everyone and I would like to say just do not give up even after five years."

**“ I would like
to say just do not
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five years ”**

Jerry's story

"After my stroke, at the age of 45, I woke up in hospital unable to move my right side and unable to speak. People were talking to me, at me, but I couldn't talk back to ask questions or tell them what I wanted.

Although I regained movement and the ability to care for myself, I was still unable to communicate with more than a word or two. Family would come to see me, run out of things to say, start looking at their watches and make an excuse to leave. All the time I was screaming in my head, 'Please stay!'

After three years of speech therapy with the NHS, I got to the point where I could manage a few words on paper as well as in my speech... but not a sentence. The breakthrough was being referred to Bristol After Stroke and joining a Conversation Group. I met other people like me with communication problems, who knew what I'd been going through. We encourage each other and make each other feel good about the progress we make.

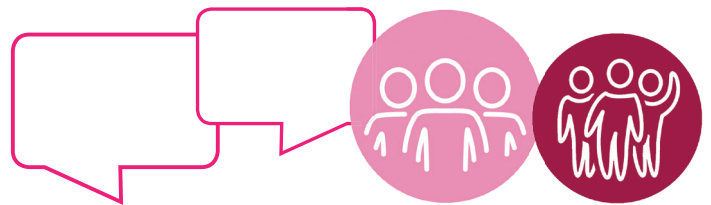
Bristol After Stroke did this for me, and it wasn't long before I felt able to give something back. Now I volunteer with Bristol After Stroke and share my experiences. I explain how it feels to be locked in with a condition where your brain is still working perfectly well but you just can't express yourself. Hopefully that will help other people affected by stroke in the future."



Now I have lots of things to say – and people want to listen to me

Conversation Group - Targeted support for people with aphasia

The Conversation Group is a small friendly group for people with aphasia which runs for 6 weeks twice a year. The aim of the course is to practice conversation, play games, and have fun in a relaxed environment – all designed to support communication in whatever way possible.



Some participants start the group only saying a few words but finish being able to hold a conversation. It helps them practice speech in a safe environment, to make mistakes but to give it a go anyway – everyone is in a similar position. This then enables them to speak more confidently at home and in the outside environment.

If you want to find out more contact us on ☎ 0117 964 7657 or ✉ office@bristolafterstroke.org.uk

Mindfulness

We ran two pilot sessions on Mindfulness in 2017. This was in response to demand for some practice opportunities from participants on our Action after Stroke courses.

The pilots were attended by 24 people in total and delivered by our Lead Counsellor, Shanti Lewis. We learnt a lot from the first session, especially from the feedback received from participants with aphasia. The second session was subsequently delivered with the support of Powerpoint slides so that the key messages could be communicated through a combination of spoken and written words, as well as pictures.

We are planning a further session this year (see below) to give people a taste of what Mindfulness is about and its relevance post-stroke and as an opportunity for deepening learning and personal practice, following on from attending Action after Stroke. As with all group experiences, the break times are opportunities for attendees to make connections with each other and discuss Mindfulness practice issues.

If you're interested please call Amy Gill on ☎ 0117 964 7657.

The next session is Tuesday 4th September, 10:30-12:30 at the Vassal Centre, Fishponds

For further information try

🌐 www.freemindfulness.org or try

YouTube "All it takes is 10 mindful minutes" by Andy Puddicombe

🌐 www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzR62JJCMBQ

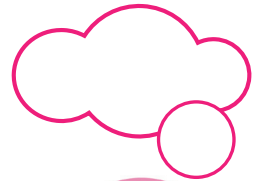
Take a Mindfulness mini-break!

Mindful breathing

- Focus on your breathing as you take just five or six breaths.
- Don't attempt to control or change your breathing in any way
- Experience the breathing directly, without thinking about what is happening and without analysing what you are doing or judging anything.
- Just focus on your breathing - notice all of the sensations as the air passes in and out of your body.

Mindful Nature Focus

- Find a green space – a garden, maybe, or a park or forest.
- Whether you stay in one place or walk around, open yourself up to all aspects of the natural environment.
- Notice what there is to see, listen to the sounds, tune in to any smells, sense the temperature and feel any movement in the air.
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Move for the Gardening Group



The gardening group have been meeting every week for the last couple of years in the church foyer of Christchurch, Downend. But now the church is undergoing extensive refurbishment, the group have moved over the road to the youth hub for the foreseeable future. They are a small and friendly bunch who enjoy all forms of indoor gardening over a cup of tea and a chat. If you have had a stroke and enjoy all things horticultural do join us!

Contact Stroke Support Coordinator, Gill Deacon, for more information ☎ 0794 374 9994, ✉ gill.deacon@bristolafterstroke.org.uk

Groups and cafes

A cornerstone of our service to people affected by stroke and their families is information, advice, support and companionship offered in warm, friendly and informal settings. Our Stroke Support Groups and drop-in Stroke Cafes continue to be a lifeline in stroke recovery and rehabilitation.



Our Stroke Cafes

Informal drop-in support, information and companionship!

Our monthly Stroke Cafes continue to grow in popularity and now count over 175 stroke affected people and their friends and families as regular attendees, and it's great to see new people made to feel welcome.

The South Gloucestershire Stroke Café in Downend is now back in its original venue following extensive renovations at Badminton Road Methodist Church. It looks amazing inside and out, and some early acoustic issues have now been ironed out.

Both cafes welcomed a wide range of speakers and entertainments. We heard about healthy eating and nutrition, power of attorney and other legal matters, exercise, driving and mobility, home adaptations. We heard about how to get involved with local health services through Healthwatch and listened to the always entertaining readings from Interact Stroke Support. Christmas fun was provided by the Bristol Re-voice Choir!



Southmead Café

This café runs on the last Tuesday of the month just outside Gate 9A at Southmead Hospital in the Brunel Building.

Anyone affected by stroke and their carers and friend are warmly welcomed with tea or coffee and an array of snacks. Fruit is always available and often we have lovely homemade cakes courtesy of Marilyn – a lovely hospital volunteer. It is so kind and thoughtful of her and we are grateful for her help. We are also grateful for the involvement of Interact (usually Martin or Marie) Their stories and poems are enormously therapeutic as people recover from their stroke. I love watching people relax and smile as they listen. People who attend seem to really enjoy the opportunity to get off the ward and to chat with others. Carers also seem to enjoy a bit of peer support and information.

In reach at Southmead Hospital

Every Tuesday afternoon one of Bristol After Stroke's Support Coordinators visits patients who have just had a stroke on the ward (and their carers and friends). We let them know that there is plenty of support available to them. This requires a sensitive and flexible approach as people vary greatly in how they may respond. Sometimes we may sit and chat for half an hour, sometimes just a quick introduction, but we always try to ensure a kind, warm and appropriate approach at this most difficult time.

Our stroke support groups



South Bristol Stroke Support Group

Our South Bristol group continues to grow. Our volunteer team has grown too as group member Phil now helps regularly.

We enjoyed Linkage's summer tea party. We had workshops on modelling with clay and music as therapy, and welcomed WE Care & Repair discussing home adaptations. The autumn was peppered with celebrations from Halloween to Diwali, and we enjoyed a fantastic Christmas meal organised by Lyn and Julie.



Fishponds Stroke Support Group

Our wonderful group for stroke survivors of working age has welcomed many new members this year. We have seen three of our wonderful members move on to exciting new adventures be it going back to work, moving to away, or to get married!.

We have enjoyed a wide range of activities introducing healthy cookery and croquet into the established mix of games, quizzes, exercise classes and so much more! It's lovely to get out of the city once in a while so we enjoyed a summer outing to the Salt and Malt Restaurant at beautiful Chew Valley Lake. The Fishponds Group continues to offer its support for local university research projects.



South Gloucestershire Stroke Support Group

The South Gloucestershire Stroke Support Group meets on a Monday afternoon at the Shireway Community Centre in Yate.

We are a very friendly club supported by a great group of volunteers who have been with the club for a number of years. When asked why they came to the group, members say that they enjoy the company and social events.

There is a twelve-week programme of talks, music, quizzes, skittles and bingo. The group holds a raffle every week where members bring prizes, which helps to fund our activities. This year we also have funding support from Gloucestershire Community Foundation to help us plan new activities and undertake some longer term development for the group.

Portway Stroke Support Group

Portway is a very popular and friendly group. We currently have 22 members ages ranging from 40s to 90s and are welcoming new members regularly.

We play skittles, scrabble, dominoes & bingo. We have regular trips out in the summer months from April to October using community transport, exploring different lunch venues around Bristol. We also have a Christmas meal out.

Group Organiser, Pat Rowe, and her team of volunteers are always on hand for a friendly chat or to talk through any problems members have.

Shout out to Bristol After Stroke volunteers!

Huge thanks to all our fantastic volunteers – to name a few ... Lin, Julie, Jon, Sarah, Jessamy, Jerry, Len, Lizzie, Suzy, Lynne and Val. We could not do what we do without you!

Fundraising news

We would not be able to do what we do, or do it as well, if it wasn't for the fantastic people who donate, challenge themselves, and sponsor events for Bristol After Stroke, and we celebrate some of those who have gone that extra mile this year – in some cases much more than a mile! For those of you who follow us on social media the following people need no introduction! David & Eddie between them have covered 1186 miles



David Exell

At 75, David Exell became the oldest Briton to take on the infamous Marathon Des Sables, beating Sir Rannulph Fiennes. The 150-mile course across the Sahara Desert in blistering heat is commonly referred to as one of the most gruelling tests of physical endurance, and David had to carry all his kit with him on his back “There are a couple of Bedouins with camels and they just bring up the rear. If they catch you up, then you're automatically disqualified” said David before leaving for Morocco in April 2017. Not only did David complete the course but he raised a phenomenal £20,000 for Bristol After Stroke – becoming our very own record beater!

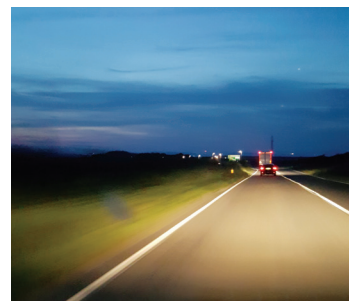
City Voices Choir

We were delighted to be chosen as Charity of the Year for community choir, City Voices Bristol. Whilst enjoying two Christmas concerts and one summer concert, we held bucket collections and received £1 for every ticket sold and raised over £2500. We were ably supported by our regular volunteers, Len Osgood and Claire Angell who spoke so movingly about their experiences and how Bristol After Stroke stepped in to help them at difficult times in their lives.

Eddie Ruskin

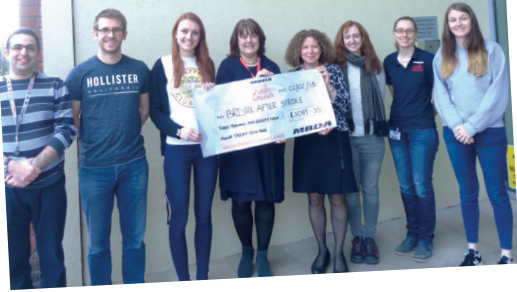
A major stroke in 2014 was never going to put the brakes on Eddie Ruskin's passion for cars and driving. He drove the 874 miles from Land's End to John O'Groats in just one day – 21st June 2017 – to raise over £2000 for Bristol After Stroke. He did it in his specially adapted his car to cope with the fact he only has one hand that he can use.

Eddie came to Bristol After Stroke for extra support in getting movement back and completed our Next Steps course when it first ran in 2016. Eddie's determination to be able to drive again led him to complete the training and reassessment needed in record time to regain his licence, he now has a new career teaching disabled people to drive – all since his stroke.



Our thanks and appreciation go out to everyone who has supported us with fundraising and donations. In the last couple of years, we have had over donations, grants and sponsorship from over 120 people, companies and grant making trusts.





MBDA (UK) Ltd

We shared the honour of being Charity of Year with All-Aboard Watersports for staff at MBDA (UK) Ltd, and engineering company based in Filton. Their young and energetic Charity Committee organised a range of events from a cake competition, to static bike races, to a Charity Ball, raising in all a fantastic £6000 shared between the two charities.

Not only did we gain funds but also a fruitful partnership with a like-minded charity offering opportunities for Bristol After Stroke clients to get into boating and all things aquatic.

Golfers for Stroke

We are delighted to have again been chosen as Captain's Charity of the Year at Bristol and Clifton Golf Club. The main event is a Charity Golf Day on Friday 8th June, and we are working hard to invite teams and sponsorship. As well as golf-related competitions, there will also be a tombola and auction.

We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of Bristol & Clifton golfers over the years and look forward to another fantastic event.

Coop Community Fund

Use your Coop Membership to support Bristol After Stroke! The Coop contributes 1% of what you spend and the proceeds of plastic carrier bag sales to charity. So far Bristol After Stroke has received over £4800 from stores around Bristol supporting different aspects of our work.



Get involved... Bristol 10k

Our own regular volunteer Len Osgood has set himself the challenge of running the Bristol 10k road race this May. This will be the first time since his stroke in 2015.

Len was a keen runner and motorbike enthusiast and was left devastated when his recovery meant that he was unable to keep doing the hobbies he loved. Len, 66, suffered from anxiety and depression after his stroke but had his life transformed by Bristol After Stroke services and now he feels able to take up running again. He decided to sign up to the Simplyhealth Great Bristol 10k on Sunday 13th May to raise money for Bristol After Stroke to repay them for their services.

Sponsor Len on Virgin Money Giving

Len is challenging Bristol After Stroke staff and friends to join him!

Remember Bristol After Stroke in your will

Thinking about supporting Bristol after Stroke into the future? Consider leaving a legacy

Every year nearly 2000 people in the West of England suffer a stroke and we know that stroke is a leading cause of disability in adults. With an aging population we know there will always be a need to support stroke affected people on their road to recovery.

If you or your loved one has benefited from our services and support, why not remember us in your will. Every gift, large or small, makes a difference and helps future stroke affected people to receive the support they need when they need it.

Contact our Fundraising Officer:

0117 964 76576

Staff and Volunteer News

Counselling

Our Lead Counsellor has recently achieved a new professional qualification in supervision.

In January 2018 our Lead Counsellor, Shanti Lewis, successfully completed an Advanced Diploma in 'Relational Supervision' (awarded Specialist Training status by The National Counselling Society, with whom she is already accredited). This means that Bristol After Stroke is in a better position to attract students from counselling courses who need to gain experience and want a placement with us. In addition, Shanti is sure to use her newly enhanced skills in many other areas of the work she undertakes for us.

Volunteer counsellors from appropriate courses greatly enhance our service and we hope to take on a couple of placements on a regular basis from now on. This could mean that more people are supported through one to one counselling sessions and, hopefully, without such a long wait. All our counselling volunteers are informed about the effects and impact of stroke, given a full induction, and closely supervised. If you know of someone who is in training or already suitably trained and might be interested in volunteering for us, then please ask them to contact Shanti on:

✉ shanti.lewis@bristolafterstroke.org.uk



Steve Ramsden – Volunteer Counsellor

Steve joined Bristol After Stroke as a Volunteer Counsellor in February 2018 and works with Shanti Lewis. He is excited to be joining Bristol After Stroke and feels he has been made to feel very welcome with warm friendly greeting.

He has lived and worked in Bristol since moving here with a young family nearly 30 years ago. His last job was with the City of Bristol College as an engineer, so this is a very different and exciting role. When not working he enjoys fly fishing and is enthusiastic supporter of Bristol City FC - sadly both these pursuits often end up without a result but there's always hope for the next time!

Professor Stephen Hill

Professor Stephen Hill joined the Board of Trustees in 2017. He had a major haemorrhagic stroke in 2015 and brings the stroke survivor's perspective to the Board. He sees this involvement as an opportunity to give something back to Bristol After Stroke for the support the organisation gave him during the frightening period immediately after discharge from hospital.

Stephen was an archaeologist and professor of lifelong learning before he retired following his stroke. Now he is learning to walk again, writing about his recovery experience, and enjoys getting involved in stroke-related research and health service projects.



Phil's Story

"I had a stroke in July 2014 when I was 28. That was when I discovered I had an underlying heart condition. After a three-month stay in hospital I rang Bristol After Stroke asking for support. I received counselling and, as I wasn't working then, I joined the South Bristol Stroke Support Group in Bedminster in Jan 2015.

This group has helped me deal with the loneliness and depression. Through the group's support and lovely volunteers, I began to regain my independence. Although I still get tired quickly, I have been able to return to my job in a school part-time, and now I volunteer at the group that give me such great support when I needed it"



Interested in volunteering with Bristol After Stroke?

We have a fabulous group of over 35 volunteers. Volunteers are an essential part of the Bristol After Stroke community. We offer full support, training, and an annual training and celebration event specially for our volunteers.

We are always looking for new volunteers for varied roles such as:

- Helping at our groups, cafés and courses, and assisting on outings, and in the office
- Helping our fundraising efforts
- Talking, listening and generally befriending

If you are interested in volunteering - be that in the short or long term, one-off or once a week, then please get in touch with Amy Gill, Services Support Officer on ☎ 0117 964 7657 or ✉ amy.gill@bristolafterstroke.org.uk



Lizzie's story

Lizzie was a busy full-time GP working in a women's prison when she had a stroke in 2013. She was found collapsed on the floor and spent several weeks in Southmead Hospital. More than the physical effects, the stroke had a huge emotional impact. After the stroke she had to retire early and feels the loss of her career and associated sense of identity, acutely. She felt she had lost everything.

Eventually, however Lizzie was referred to Bristol After Stroke. From the support she received she started to feel much more positive, and now volunteers at our Bristol Stroke Café and the monthly café at Southmead Hospital where her medical expertise is most welcome. She loves to feel like she's doing something positive even if it's as small a task as making a cup of tea for someone.

Lizzie says Bristol After Stroke gave her "the shove to get back to life because it's too easy to mope!"

“ Bristol After Stroke gave me the shove to get back to life because it's too easy to mope! ”



Dates for your diary 2018

	Date(s)	Time	Venue
Next Steps Wednesdays	23rd May – 4th July	2.00- 4.00pm	University of the West of England, Glenside Campus
	10th October –28th November	2.00- 4.00pm	University of the West of England, Glenside Campus
ACTion after Stroke Tuesdays	10th April -8th May	10.30am – 12.30pm	Sue McMullen Room, The Vassal Centre, Fishponds
	21st October –28th November	2.00- 4.00pm	Sue McMullen Room, The Vassal Centre, Fishponds
Conversation Group Tuesdays	17th April –29th May	10.30am – 12.00pm	The Station, Silver Street, Bristol
	11th September - 16th October	10.30am – 12.00pm	The Station, Silver Street, Bristol
Mindfulness Session	Tuesday 4th September	10.30am – 12.30pm	Gill Meeting Room, The Vassal Centre
Wellbeing Day Bristol After Stroke Annual Conference for service users, partner organisations, friends and supporters.	Friday 21st September	9.30am – 2.30pm	Oatley Hall, St Monica Trust, Cote Lane
Volunteer Day	Tuesday 5th June	10.00am – 3.00pm	Vassal Centre, Fishponds, Bristol
Bristol Stroke Café Wednesdays	16th May, 20th June, 18th July, 15th August, 7th October, 21st November, 12th December	1.30pm – 3.15pm	Oatley Hall, St Monica Trust, Cote Lane
	Please note there will not be a café in September.		
South Gloucestershire Stroke Café Fridays	13th April, 11th May, 8th June, 13th July, 10th August, 14th September, 12th October, 9th November, 14th December	11.00am – 1.00pm	Badminton Road Methodist Church, Downend, Bristol
Aphasia Drop-In Mondays	9th April, 14th May, 4th June, 2nd July, 6th August, 3rd September, 1st October, 5th November, 3rd December	2.00- 4.00pm	The Station, Silver Street, Bristol

New website

Not only do we have a new name, logo and style, but we have a new website. Hosted on a more interactive platform designed specifically for charities, we hope our new website will become a valuable and valued resource for people after stroke in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and surrounding areas.

We can quickly add information, news and events, so please do use it and let us have anything you would like to share  www.bristolafterstroke.org.uk

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Keep in touch

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To read more about any of these stories,
please visit www.bristolafterstroke.org.uk