

## Stroke



### What is a stroke?

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. Damage to the brain can affect how the body works; it can also change how you think and feel.

Stroke happens to people of all ages. It almost always comes without warning and its impact can be life changing. Stroke survivors can be left with physical disabilities, cognitive impairment, fatigue, and emotional or behavioural issues.

The effects of a stroke are unique to each individual, varying according to the size of the stroke and the area affected.

There are three different types of stroke:

#### Ischaemic stroke

An ischaemic stroke is caused by a blockage, cutting off the blood supply to the brain. This is the most common type of stroke.

#### Haemorrhagic stroke

A haemorrhagic stroke is caused by a bleeding in or around the brain.

#### Transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

A TIA is known as a 'mini stroke'. It is similar to a stroke but the initial symptoms last for a short amount of time. This is because the blockage that stops the blood and oxygen getting to the brain is temporary.

### Impact on communication

Communication is a complex skill with many different facets. For example, when someone asks you a question, you must attend to, process and understand what was asked, decide on your answer, put your words together and reply, all while following social 'rules'.

If a part of the brain that supports any one of these skills is damaged, it can affect communication.

Depending on the area of the brain that is damaged, your client may have problems with any area of communication and their difficulties in each area can vary considerably. They may experience:

#### Problems with speech and language

- Difficulty forming or saying words.
- Only using single words or short sentences.
- Missing words out or using them in the wrong order.
- Using one word while meaning another.

#### Problems with understanding

- Difficulty processing information, becoming easily 'overloaded'.
- Struggling to fully understand what other people say.
- Struggling to follow instructions.

#### Problems with literacy

- Losing the ability to read.
- Retaining writing skills but losing reading skills.

- Struggling to recognise written words.
- Difficulty identifying key points in a document.
- Difficulty forming letters or spelling words.
- Difficulty writing or typing coherent sentences.

### Problems with communication and pragmatics

- Taking things literally and struggling to interpret figurative language.
- Struggling to follow communication 'rules' (e.g., taking turns in conversation, using appropriate language).

## Fatigue

Fatigue is a very common symptom which can impact stroke survivors over the long term. It is important to be aware of the possible impact of fatigue in legal proceedings, as this can have a considerable negative effect on many aspects of communication, including an individual's ability to maintain their attention, manage their emotions and process information (in both hearings and legal conferences).

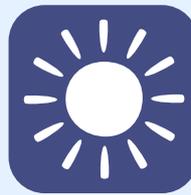
## Tips for legal professionals



**Take regular breaks.** Your client may have good days and bad days. If they are feeling tired or in a low mood, it can make communication harder. Take regular breaks to support their attention, emotional regulation and communication.



**Schedule meetings and hearings** (where possible) at times when your client is less fatigued. For example, they may be more fatigued in the afternoon. Talk to your client and schedule things when they are feeling their best. This is also a helpful point to consider, if your client is due to give evidence. They may be better able to get their best evidence in the morning.



**Consider your environment.** Being in a busy or noisy place may make it harder for your client to concentrate and communicate. Take steps to reduce distractions and background noise.

**If your client has difficulty following, understanding or using verbal communication:**



**Explore alternative communication methods**, if your client has difficulty using or following purely verbal communication. Mediums like drawing, writing, texting, typing or gesture may help support communication.



**Use short sentences and simple words.**



**Give one piece of information at a time.**



**Ask comprehension questions** to check your client's understanding. For example, ask *"What is bad character?"* rather than, *"Do you understand bad character?"*.



**Ask short, simple questions**, starting with a 'question word' (Who, What, Why, How, Did, Is).



**Write short, simple bullet-point summaries** of meetings or key information from hearings (subject to your client's level of literacy). Learn [how to create easy read documents here](#).



**Recap important information frequently.**



## Further reading

### From The Access Brief

- [How to create visual aids](#)
- [How to create easy read documents](#)
- [Supporting expressive communication](#)
- [Supporting emotional regulation](#)
- [Intermediary assessments](#)
- [How can an intermediary assist at trial?](#)

## About Different Strokes



Different Strokes supports working age and younger stroke survivors.

The charity promotes independent stroke recovery, drawing from the experience, knowledge and peer support of its members, to help younger stroke survivors reclaim their lives.

For more information please contact:  
Phone: 0345 130 7172  
Email: [info@differentstrokes.co.uk](mailto:info@differentstrokes.co.uk)  
Website: [www.differentstrokes.co.uk](http://www.differentstrokes.co.uk)

## Intermediary services

If you are concerned about your client's ability to communicate effectively and participate in legal proceedings, Communicourt can help.

We will assess your client to understand their communication needs and how these might affect them in court. Your client does not need to have a diagnosis. Our reports will identify any particular communication issues and make bespoke recommendations to help you and your client throughout proceedings.

If intermediary assistance is recommended, one of our highly trained intermediaries can be there throughout proceedings to facilitate those recommendations.

**Intermediaries are mostly funded by HMCTS, with no charges or payments required by legal representatives.**

## How to book an intermediary

- 1 Refer online.** Refer your client for an assessment through [our online portal](#) (5 minutes).
- 2 Funding.** We send a quote for you to send to Legal Aid / HMCTS to approve (24 hours).
- 3 Book assessment.** Once funding is approved, please let us know. We will schedule an assessment (2-6 weeks).
- 4 Assessment will** take up to 3 hours and can be conducted in person or remotely. You will then receive a report (7 days).
- 5 Book dates** for hearings or conferences. We will send you booking forms to be signed by the court. Once signed, we will book the intermediary.