



Megan's Story – Stroke at 37



“I was 37 when I had my stroke and had a 3% chance of survival, so I was very lucky. I had a stroke after the birth of my second daughter in 2013. I was a very fit and healthy person – in fact I was a personal trainer!

However, I was unaware that I had a large hole in my heart (PFO, **patent foramen ovale**) – and a clot travelled from my leg, through the hole and neatly into my brain.



The result was '**locked-in syndrome**', which was of course terrifying. It's a rare neurological disorder characterised by complete paralysis of voluntary muscles, except for those that control the eyes. I did have **PTSD** following the stroke as being 'locked in' was very harrowing and affected me severely.

I was in Portugal on holiday at the time. Surgeons operated and successfully removed the clot. The Santa Maria hospital in Lisbon was amazing – they saved my life. However, I was not allowed to travel home for two weeks, and being away from my children was the hardest part ...

When I got home I couldn't even remember how to turn the kettle on; I could hardly walk, I could hardly talk and I was feeling *very* down.

As other survivors know, the road to recovery can be long and hard, but it is not impossible! I would say the hardest part of recovery for me was the mental side of things. I suffered with (and still do to some extent) *crippling* anxiety.

Throughout my recovery, and as corny as it sounds, I promised myself that when I recovered I would try to make a difference and help anyone who suffered like I did. I basically felt like I did my rehabilitation on my own; research, repetition etc....

I am sure other survivors can relate.

I got more knowledge before lockdown happened when I volunteered for a **neuropsychio** in my area. I was already a fully qualified personal trainer when I had the stroke, so I had the tools to work on myself physically. I got a further stroke rehabilitation qualification with the **ARNI Institute**. (Action for Rehabilitation from Neurological Injury).

They then offered me a job where I worked for 18 months, then lockdown happened and that's when I did further studying. I now work with them, alongside the only company which the ARNI Institute has accredited to provide its qualified and insured instructors for stroke rehabilitation and exercise to the public.



*[ARNI is one of the **'Useful Links'** on our **website**. Find your nearest Different Strokes group **here** or if you're a member then ask our **Facebook group** for suggestions on services other members local to you have found useful.]*



Taking charge of your physical recovery after stroke can be overwhelming. View our new (and free) exercise programme [here](#).

I find it suits me as I can fit it around my kids and dog. I can honestly say that I love my job now and all my amazing clients and that is the most rewarding feeling in the world."



Your donation helps others like Megan on their journeys

There are 100,000 strokes in the UK each year with 1 in 4 happening to somebody of working age or younger. Different Strokes aims to promote independent stroke recovery and help these younger stroke survivors reclaim their lives.

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