



South West London
Academic, Health and Social Care
System

Case Studies- Series 1

Empowering Stroke Survivors to Take Charge of Recovery

Many services aspire to be more patient-centred, but what changes to practice, process, language and culture are required to achieve this goal? SWLS funded Bridges Self-management programme aims to ensure health and social care staff are fully trained and supported to give stroke survivors a leading role in their own rehabilitation.

What Does The Patient Want To Do?

In 2010 SWLS funded Dr Fiona Jones, Professor in Rehabilitation and founder of Bridges, to assess the full path of support for stroke survivors in Kingston; including acute, community, social, and voluntary care. The aim was to promote and support self-management by using a workbook for stroke survivors and training for stroke practitioners.

At the heart of both workbook and workshop was one key question, 'What does the patient want to do?' This would then springboard into looking at how practitioners' expertise could help put the patient's plan for their own care into action rather than a top down approach. Bridges initially held four workshops with participants from all parts of the stroke pathway.



They successfully trained 70 members of staff from 11 different teams and services on integrating self-management support; the results of which were featured in the *Journal of Interprofessional Care*.

"SWLS were quick to see that this work really hit the mark in key areas they wanted to impact. It was about how this programme applied to the

whole workforce, not just for professional staff but for all support staff - everyone that comes into contact with a stroke survivor. The work also showed how to sustain these changes in everyday practice."

Dr Fiona Jones, Professor, Rehabilitation Research, Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, St George's University of London.

Embedding a Person-Centred Approach

However, Bridges' more ambitious goal was not just to provide an add-on to services' existing practice, but actually change the culture of how everybody works and successfully embed this approach in a busy workplace.

"We realised it's not just about training professionals. It's about the organisational processes and the ongoing learning needed to sustain change." – Dr Fiona Jones

With further funding from SWLS Bridges expanded to provide extra training, plus special master classes for self-management 'champions' amongst staff across south London. They also made a concerted effort to provide 'brief Bridges' training for over 40 support staff who traditionally wouldn't have access to anything like this. Support workers interact with stroke survivors and others with long-term conditions on an everyday basis, so Dr Jones and her team believe this is an area of huge, untapped potential. Looking ahead they aim to tailor their programme to the needs

of the local workforce and patient populations; delivering a more consultative, whole systems approach.

To date, Bridges has successfully held over 80 workshops, delivering training to over 1,500 health and social care professionals, reaching an estimated 4,000 stroke survivors. The programme is delivering actual change where it counts: 98% of workshop participants report a change in practice to more person-centred approaches.

Expanding Self-Management to Long Term Conditions

Bridges' work was selected as a case impact study for the recent research assessment exercise submitted by Kingston University. Importantly feedback from patients and families has been very positive and people feel more involved in their rehabilitation and can access professional expertise for support, without feeling dependent upon the practitioner. One stroke survivor has commented he actually had to persuade the practitioner to discharge him because he was so happy managing on his own.

"SWLS have been really supportive of the project right from the start, and they've also been great at helping us with attracting further funding. There is a straightforward approach to accessing SWLS Small Grants." – Dr Fiona Jones

Bridges is now a social enterprise in its own right, as a unique partnership with St George's University of London and Kingston University. It has recently secured a contract from Your Healthcare in Kingston to deliver self-management training throughout their workforce for all long term conditions, not just strokes. It is also expanding its research and development to include self-management support for people with [Brain injury](#).

"SWLS aren't precious about the areas they want to focus on. For them it's about where the need is and where the potential for impact is going to be greatest. SWLS have supported our application to other long-term conditions." – Dr Fiona Jones

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