

Stroke survivors 'are dumped by the NHS'

Sufferers feel abandoned after leaving hospital and face waiting up to a year for the right treatment — or paying for it themselves

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Stroke survivors are being left to languish at home with a “shocking” lack of support. Many say they feel abandoned by the NHS.

Juliet Bouverie, chief executive of the Stroke Association, said a new national plan was required to help the 1.2m stroke survivors in the UK. Some have to wait up to 12 months for psychological help.

“As a stroke survivor, your life and the life of your family is turned upside down,” she said. “Many stroke survivors say they feel abandoned, as if they have dropped off a cliff. The provision in some areas is shocking.”

About 100,000 people suffer a stroke

every year in the UK; it is one of the country’s leading causes of death.

Andrew Marr, the broadcaster and journalist, who suffered a stroke in January 2013, said better support for stroke survivors — many of whom are of working age — could help them return more quickly to employment. He was back at work within six months, but largely because he paid for additional physiotherapy.

Stroke survivors can wait up to four months for speech therapy and up to a year for psychological support, according to data from the Royal College of Physicians. Stroke survivors say there is insufficient physiotherapy, a treatment which would ensure the best recovery.

A stroke strategy, launched in 2007, outlined a 10-year plan to overhaul stroke

services and has seen significant improvement in acute treatment. The Stroke Association is calling for a new action plan to build on improvements and outline a new strategy for the rehabilitation of stroke victims.

Nathan Ridgard, 40, a self-employed businessman and a father-of-two from Harrogate, North Yorkshire, suffered a stroke on New Year’s Eve 2012. After being discharged from hospital, he said he was given some leaflets by the NHS on coping with a stroke, but struggled to read them because of his poor vision.

“I just felt I had been dumped out in the world,” he said. He received some NHS physiotherapy, but also paid for private sessions to supplement them. He has since made a good recovery.

Professor Tony Rudd, National Clinical Director for stroke at NHS England, said: “The quality of care and survival rates for stroke are now at record highs. We are working with the Royal College of Physicians and others local health service leaders to improve rehabilitation care for everyone who suffers a stroke.”

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Andrew Marr, who had a stroke in 2013, paid for physiotherapy to help him get back to work sooner