

LONDON NORTH GROUP



John Murray retires from Different Strokes London North charity after 8 years

John Murray stepped down as co-ordinator of the Different Strokes North London Group at its Annual General Meeting on 18th October, when a new co-ordinator was be elected.

John joined the group in 2003 and became volunteer co-ordinator in 2006. He has been an active force in encouraging members to take part in research projects. Being a member of the '*National Stroke Research Network*' he was in a key position to feed back relevant information to the group. A recent example being the inspiring work being done by Cambridge University where brain imaging demonstrates that repetitive movement of the affected limb results in new paths being formed in the brain. He has been instrumental in encouraging group members to persevere and not give up the slow and painstaking business of trying to recover the use of a limb or speech.

John said today, "I became interested in stroke research after suffering a stroke myself in 1994. I was shocked not only by the stroke but also by my own ignorance of stroke. This has been well summarised in the introduction to the Stroke Strategy. 'Lack of awareness of stroke is a significant problem. People don't know what a stroke is, what the symptoms are, or that it is a treatable disease that warrants the same response as a heart attack. Nor do they know what their own risk of having a stroke is, how to reduce that risk, or that stroke is largely preventable."

Debbie Wilson, Different Strokes Chief Executive added, "Different Strokes provides information, advice, guidance and support from its head office in Milton Keynes, but relies on volunteers around the country to organise its specialised exercise classes. There are 50 groups around the UK providing these classes, and some organise other activities too. Under John's leadership, the North London Group has become one of the most successful and effective providing exercise classes, Chi Kung sessions, massage, speech and language therapy, talks and social activities. We will miss the huge contribution he makes to our work."

John has also played an active role on the Haringey Council's '*Scrutiny Review of Stroke Prevention Committee*' , a pioneering local initiative started in 2008 following the last government's '*National Stroke Strategy*' published in 2007. This brought together, for the first time, the local Council, the PCT, the local Hospital Stroke Unit, representatives of local GPs, and representatives of local charities such as Different Strokes and Age Concern. Haringey is a good innovative example of the potential for collaboration between statutory and voluntary agencies which is reaching out to local people in new ways about stroke

Councillor David Winskill, Chair of Haringey's Scrutiny Review Committee said, "I have known John for many years and I was delighted to learn that we would be working together on the Stroke Prevention Review. John brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to the project but it was his natural tendency to seek consensus that allowed the review to achieve so much in establishing collaborative working. I'll miss his good counsel and I'm sure he'll be getting the occasional phone call from me asking his advice!"



Support for Working Age Stroke Survivors

LONDON NORTH GROUP

Sarah Padfield, Neurological Conditions Lead for Haringey Integrated Community Therapy Team (ICTT) added, "John Murray's tireless enthusiasm for promoting close collaboration along the pathway for Haringey Stroke survivors will be very missed. He has enabled us to develop strong links with Different Strokes so that stroke survivors who we provide community based rehabilitation for are able to benefit from the valuable services provided by Different Strokes. His passion in ensuring that support is ongoing for stroke survivors in Haringey once they no longer require intensive input from health and rehabilitation providers has been inspiring. I am very confident that the close collaboration that John has established between our team and Different Strokes will continue to blossom on his retirement.

The committee produced a comprehensive local report in 2009 identifying key data about stroke locally and areas for future action. It also funded a poster campaign in local tube stations and buses to help tackle the widespread lack of information about stroke. With John at the helm, Different Strokes London North has played an important role in helping to promote these joint new collaborative arrangements.

Before the stroke, John was Haringey Council's Borough Architect. During his time in Haringey, the involvement of tenants in the design of their homes was pioneered along with multi disciplinary teams accountable to their areas. He is married to Ursula, a lecturer at Birkbeck College and has one daughter Helen who works for a research project in Oxford.

For further information please contact Bernadette Wilson-Govind 020 88817737/07760 270848.
bernadette1@blueyonder.co.uk

Background information:

History: Different Strokes was founded as a national charity in 1996 specifically to support stroke survivors of working age and children (Charity No 1092168, website: www.differentstrokes.co.uk). It participates in wider research and policy relating to strokes and has a network of 50 exercise groups throughout the country.

The London North Group of Different Strokes was established in 2001 by a group of younger stroke survivors from Tottenham. Since then, the group has steadily increased in size, from 30 in 2003, to over 125 in 2011, with around 40-50 members being active. The Group is based in Wood Green Central Library and activities are funded largely by Haringey Adult Learning Service (HALS).

Aims: Through active self-help and mutual support, our aim is to help stroke survivors of working age optimise their recovery, take control of their lives and regain as much independence as possible, including returning to work.

What we do: We provide services, on a self-organised, voluntary basis, which help enhance mobility, boost confidence and reduce the sense of isolation experienced by stroke survivors. In addition, by sharing our experience of stroke, we learn from each other, exchange coping strategies and discover new skills and values that equip us to move back into the world. Members are encouraged to become involved in the running of the group and to take part in research projects.

The group meets four times a week (two mornings a week for Chi Kung, massage and talks and two afternoons a week for exercise classes). Last year they secured funding from Grassroots which enabled them to pay a qualified Speech and Language therapist to run a fortnightly Aphasia Group and this year John has arranged for HALS to fund the aphasia group from October.

Website: www.dsln.co.uk <<http://www.dsln.co.uk>>