



STROKE SA

STROKE
FACT
SHEET

6

WORK FOLLOWING STROKE

There are numerous reasons why people may experience difficulty returning to work following a stroke. Some examples include:

- being unable to meet the physical demands of work
- fatigue
- difficulty concentrating for long periods
- difficulty with problem solving and thinking through tasks.

Successful return to paid employment may be aided through careful consideration of the individual needs and characteristics and matching these to a particular job. Other factors which may need to be taken into consideration include the attitudes of employers and work mates, and the physical environment.(3) There are a number of agencies and services within the community that can provide assistance in helping return to work.

WHY RETURN TO WORK?

For a majority of people a strong desire to work seems to originate from more than just a desire to earn money. We wish to work for a variety of reasons including:

1. **The need for self esteem** - work often provides people with the opportunity to gain feedback from others, which enables them to feel that they are achieving and doing something which is worthwhile.
2. **The ability to be self supporting** - this does not only mean being able to support yourself financially, but also being able to carry out tasks without the assistance of others and to form your own social contacts etc.
3. **The desire to be part of a group** - people often feel the need to have status within a group and to have a definite role within society. Work provides opportunities for developing support networks and social contacts.
4. **To gain security** - work provides not only financial security but also a routine and a familiar environment from which a person can gain a sense of belonging and a feeling of being needed. (2)

WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOLLOWING STROKE?

A variety of services are available for those left with disabilities following stroke, to help them to find work once they are fit and ready to do so. These options include:

1. **A return to previous employment without consultation from professional staff.** This often occurs if the person experiences a good recovery from a stroke.(1) It is helpful to have a supportive employer who is willing to help overcome any problems which may arise.
2. **A return to previous employment or new employment following job skills training.** There are a number of organisations within South Australia who will assess a persons abilities to return to employment following stroke and who will provide appropriate training.

These include:

- The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET)
- Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services (CRS)
- HETA
- Alfreda Occupational Rehabilitation Services
- Bedford Industries
- Phoenix Society

The aim of job skills training is to:

teach independence in self care tasks

improve physical abilities including strength, dexterity, coordination and balance in order to help fulfil the physical demands of a job

help improve thinking skills relevant to a job

to initiate and improve work tolerance

improve social skills (for example - use of public transport, handling money, relating to work mates, driving a car etc)

helping to regain employment:

provide support in new employment situations.(1,3,4)

3. **Voluntary work** - for some the need for social interaction may far outweigh the need for paid employment - in this case voluntary work may be an ideal option. Through voluntary work a person may be able to utilise those skills learnt in previous employment, or a person may wish to do voluntary work which will enable them to develop new skills.(3)
4. **Sheltered Employment** - for people with relatively severe disabilities sheltered workshops are available which provide employment and rewards for work. Individual needs will be assessed and the person will be matched to an appropriate job. Sheltered employment may be utilised as a form of training to develop the skills needed to enter other forms of employment. (1,2,3)
5. **Another option may include self or home based employment.**(2) The job skills training services listed previously may be able to provide some assistance for those who wish to become self employed.

CONTACTS

JOB TRAINING

- Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services – Phone 84024233
- HETA - Phone 8212 7771
- Alfreda Occupational Rehabilitation Services - Phone 8200 9200
- Bedford Industries - Phone 8275 0211
- Phoenix Society - Phone 8352 1133

VOLUNTARY WORK

- Volunteering SA Inc - Phone 8221 7177
- Fleurieu Volunteer Resource Centre - Phone 83849202
- Para District Volunteer Services Inc - Phone 8250 1582

SHELTERED WORK

- Bedford Industries - Phone 8275 0211
- Phoenix Society - Phone 8352 1133

REFERENCES

1. British Heart Foundation. *Recovery from a stroke*. Britain: Author
2. Hale, G (Ed.) (1983). *The new source book for the disabled*. London: Heinemann
3. Turner, A (Ed.) (1987) *The practice of occupational therapy: An introduction to the treatment of physical dysfunction*. (2nd ed) UK: Churchill Livingston.
4. Wilcock, A.A. (1986). *Occupational therapy approaches to stroke*. Australia: Churchill Livingston
5. Livingston

(Researched and written by Jocelyn Westly © Stroke SA 1993 Copy with acknowledgement. Revised 2004)

For further information and support contact
Stroke SA Inc
Postal Address 302 South Road Hilton SA 5033
Telephone (08) 83524644
Email: strokesa@chariot.net.au