

The Stroke Association launches charity sector's first online digital garden

In a charity first, the Stroke Association has launched its own online digital garden – Strength in Bloom – to raise vital funds for the charity and support stroke survivors. The digital garden is being supported by the UK's leading garden centre, Dobbies.

The digital garden, which is inspired by Stroke Association's debut at RHS Chelsea Flower Show this year, invites supporters to donate by planting symbolic flowers and trees or selecting a plaque to dedicate to their cherished individual, creating a virtual haven they can visit from anywhere in the world, for years to come.

Juliet Bouverie OBE, Chief Executive of the Stroke Association, said: "Our first ever virtual garden, Strength in Bloom, is a digital haven filled with the healing power of nature. We're asking people to dedicate a symbolic flower, tree or plaque to celebrate the resilience of a stroke survivor, or honour the memory of a loved one lost to stroke. Inspired by our Garden for Recovery at the 2024 RHS Chelsea Flower Show, we hope people can share stories of strength, find a sense of tranquillity and also reach a community from anywhere in the world.

"Our digital garden will help us to achieve our ambitious new goal; to reach everyone with stroke support as quickly as possible after their stroke, while also creating a beautiful, lasting legacy.

"Through tailored, coordinated and empowering stroke support, the Stroke Association helps survivors and their loved ones to achieve their best possible recovery. We provide support that covers every aspect of a survivor's recovery, so they are not just living to survive, but able to live life again."

David Robinson, CEO at Dobbies Garden Centre, said: "Dobbies has collaborated with the Stroke Association for a number of years as gardening is known to help support people rehabilitating from stroke, as well as improve overall health and wellbeing. Their Strength in Bloom virtual garden is an inclusive way for everyone to experience the joy of gardens and garden living, and we're proud to be involved."

According to research* from Censuswide for Dobbies, approximately a third of respondents claim gardening improves their mental health, with both Dobbies and Stroke Association celebrating the benefits that all types of gardening can bring. To enhance the partnership, guests attending Dobbies' free Grow How sessions throughout August, will have the opportunity to donate to the charity. Grow How provides an interactive opportunity to learn from Dobbies' horticultural experts, ask questions and get seasonal gardening tips.

Stroke Association's Garden for Recovery at RHS Chelsea Flower Show: the inspiration behind the digital garden

The digital garden, Strength in Bloom, aims to create a lasting legacy online by bringing the design elements of the Stroke Association's physical garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show into the digital world.

*The research was conducted by Censuswide with 2007 natrep consumers in UK 16+ between 22 March-25 March 2024. Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society, which is based on the ESOMAR principles and are members of The British Polling Council.

The Stroke Association's Garden for Recovery was designed by critically acclaimed landscape designer Miria Harris, herself a stroke survivor, and was sponsored by Project Giving Back, the grant-giving charity that funds gardens for good causes at RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

The garden was shaped by Miria's experience of stroke and the stories of other stroke survivors, as a place to support and inspire stroke recovery, both physically and mentally. A hopeful, positive space, the garden mirrored the charity's purpose – to support every stroke survivor to achieve their best possible recovery.

The physical garden was welcoming and accessible, designed as a peaceful, sensory space for recovery. Colour, scent and the sound of water provided soft way-finding for those with additional visual or mobility needs, while interconnected pathways through a contoured landscape acknowledge the difficult road to recovery with its ups and downs.

After being displayed at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show from 21-25 May 2024, the garden was reconfigured and moved to its permanent location adjacent to the stroke unit at Chapel Allerton Hospital, Leeds, where it provides a place for connection and rest for stroke survivors and their families.

Over 88,000 people survive a stroke every year in the UK, but surviving a stroke is just the start of a long and traumatic battle to finding their way back to life. Mums, dads, grandparents, young people, even children can be stroke survivors, and the impact of stroke on them and their loved ones can be catastrophic. A stroke can leave survivors unable to move, see, speak, or even swallow.

The Stroke Association is the leading stroke support charity in the UK. From providing vital stroke support services to funding pioneering stroke research, the Stroke Association relies on fundraising in order to support stroke survivors to achieve their best possible recovery. Currently, the Stroke Association can only reach one third of the survivors who most need the charity's help.

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About Dobbies

Dobbies was founded in 1865 by James Dobbie and is headquartered near Edinburgh.

It is the UK's leading garden centre retailer, with 3,800 colleagues and 77 stores, including six little dobbies.

Dobbies shares its passion for gardens and plants through own brand and branded products, concession partners and services. Many stores also feature a restaurant or coffee shop, where customers can enjoy refreshments or meals in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

Dobbies champions garden living all-year-round and offers a calendar of events and experiences that bring people and communities together.

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