Introduction
An important part of stroke rehabilitation is facilitating participation in community activities, work, education, volunteering or leisure activities, yet this has become increasingly challenging with cuts to social support. The occupational therapy stroke service in Wolverhampton has started a range of supported group activities in order to:
• Increase social interaction and reduce depression
• Build confidence
• Increase exercise levels

These groups are predominately run by volunteers, with money raised used to fund gym, swimming and cycling instructors. Therapists assess the patient for suitability for the group(s) and attend the first session with them to discuss the individual goals with the group leader. Their progress is reviewed at intervals and patients moved through the groups as appropriate.

Method
Questionnaires are given to the patient to return at the end of the year or when the patient finishes in the group. The questionnaires were simple to fill in to reflect the needs of patients with language difficulties.

Results
In 2017 111 patients were attending the groups, with another 36 patients joining the groups throughout the year. 46 Patients were discharged from the groups. 77 questionnaires were returned.

Patients were asked how satisfied they were with the groups.

Groups
Art and Craft
3 different sessions offer instruction in a range of art mediums.

Gardening
The hospital retreat gardening has undercover areas, seated bench areas and a large greenhouse and the patients grow both flowers and vegetables and sell produce to raise funds.

Cycling
6 groups a week use the local park. Most patients use adaptable trikes. Each year a number of our cyclists enter the Wolverhampton marathon cycle challenge.

Indoor Shooting
Air rifles are used within a 10 metre indoor range, with adaptations and support provided as required.

Model railway
The groups have built a large railway layout and run a range of trains round the track.

Games
A variety of table top games are played, including scrabble, dominoes, chess, backgammon, cards and a quiz always ends the session.

Fishing
The moat project, with excellent facilities and equipment is used as the fishing venue

Swimming
An instructor is funded to provide support in the local pool which has a hoist chair and where the water is depth adjustable.

Gym
An instructor is funded to provide both group and individual work within the gym session.

Patients were asked to rate the benefit to them of attending the group(s) under the following factors. Not all factors were relevant to every group.

Once patients have achieved their goals they are moved through the groups. An analysis was made of what happened to them when they finished attending the groups.

Conclusion
These groups have allowed patients to develop confidence and continue with their rehabilitation in a supportive environment. They have been used as a stepping stone to return to work, voluntary work or further training for many patients, with others developing confidence to attend activities in the community either on their own or with friends made at the groups.

Quotes
‘Following a difficult post-stroke period, joining the games group has been invaluable. It has given me a place to socialise, share experiences and have fun. Without the group I would have continued a slow descent into being more socially isolated, downhearted and lacking in confidence.’

‘I would like to sincerely thank you and the entire team namely: Mick, Dave and all the volunteers that have assisted me to reach this extent. I have a great testimony from the time I was introduced to different groups to join and you specifically recommended the cycling, swimming, lunching ladies and art. I had no confidence and didn’t believe in myself but all I wanted was to walk, speak, write and remember things again. Am glad to report that all these things have been achieved.

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