



# Exploring the Return to Work experiences of people who experienced stroke during the COVID-19 pandemic

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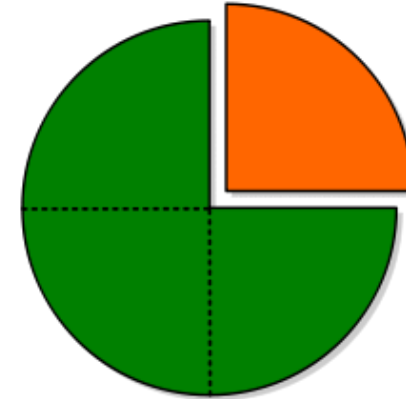
Katie Powers, Dr Julie Phillips, Prof. Audrey Bowen,  
Prof. Caroline Watkins, Prof. Kate Radford, Dr David Clarke



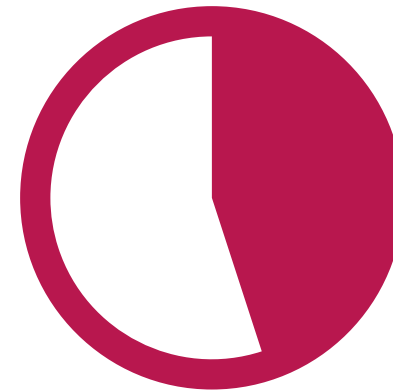


# Background

- Around 1.1 million people experience strokes every year in Europe
- 110,000 per year in UK
- Many benefits of returning to work



Around 25% are working age (in UK)



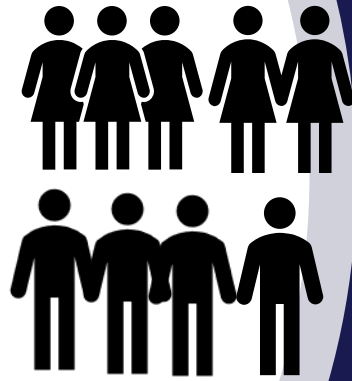
Less than 50% return to work (in UK)

# RETAKE trial

- **Aim:** To help stroke survivors to successfully return to work
- **Return To work After stroKE (RETAKE)** study
- Large trial comparing **Early Stroke Specialist Vocational Rehabilitation (ESSVR)** + usual care with usual care alone
- Further study: Returning to work during the COVID-19 pandemic



# Methods



9 RETAKE participants  
(5 women, 4 men)

In jobs impacted by the  
pandemic (e.g. retail,  
hairdressing)



Qualitative telephone  
interviews

Digitally recorded,  
professionally transcribed



Thematic analysis

Themes discussed and  
agreed with the research  
team.



# Issues preventing or delaying return to work

Difficulties contacting GPs

Delayed medical procedures

Guilt about using NHS

Delayed driving assessments

Driving licences not returned

Problems with remote working

Furlough (business closed)

Childcare issues





# Enablers for returning to work

Supportive employers

Working from home

Flexible working

Avoiding commute

Managing fatigue

Furlough (more recovery time)

Information about stroke and return-to-work





# Conclusions

## Challenges

- Unable to work from home
- Lockdown



## Opportunities

- Working from home
- Technology



**Limitations/Next steps:** Employers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic

A stylized illustration of a hand holding a sign. The sign is yellow with a black border and contains the text 'ANY QUESTIONS?' in large, bold, black, sans-serif capital letters. The hand is also stylized, with a yellow skin tone and a black outline. The background behind the sign and hand is a solid red color. The entire illustration is set against a light blue background that has a jagged, torn-paper-like edge separating it from the rest of the slide.

**ANY  
QUESTIONS?**

# Thank you for listening!

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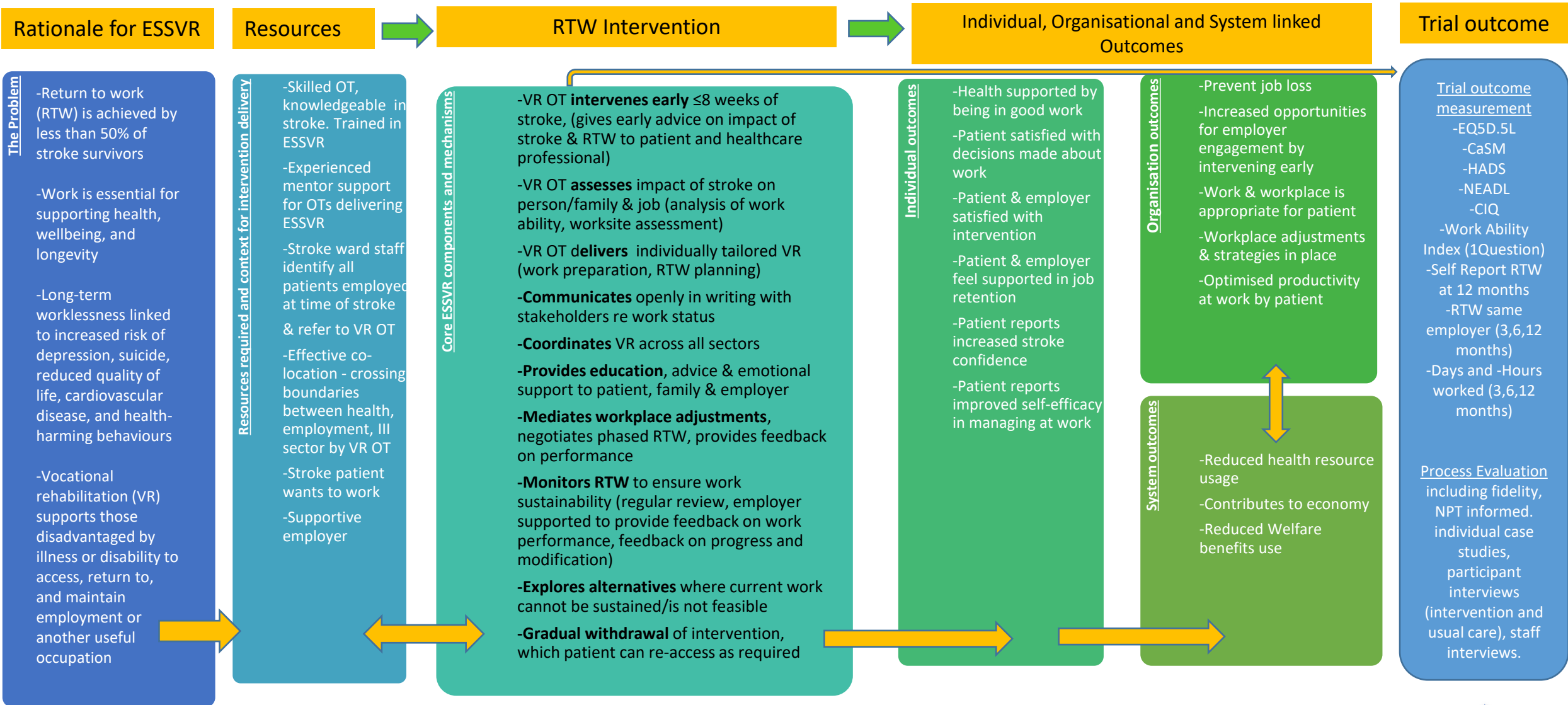
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## Early Stroke Specialist Vocational Rehabilitation (ESSVR) Logic Model

Aim: To support patients who have had a stroke to return to and remain in work.

RETurn to work After stroke (RETAKE) trial



**Moderating and contextual factors:** Legal employment framework; National Clinical Guidelines for Stroke; Clinical Commissioning for stroke services; Cross sector engagement in VR programme support; Stroke survivor support and social network.



# Elements of ESSVR from the logic model

## The vocational rehabilitation OT:

- **Intervenes early  $\leq 8$  weeks of stroke**
- **Assesses impact of stroke on person, family & job**
- **Delivers individually tailored VR**
- **Communicates openly in writing**
- **Coordinates V R**
- **Provides education, advice & emotional support**
- **Mediates workplace adjustments**
- **Monitors RTW to ensure work sustainability**
- **Explores alternatives**
- **Gradual withdrawal**