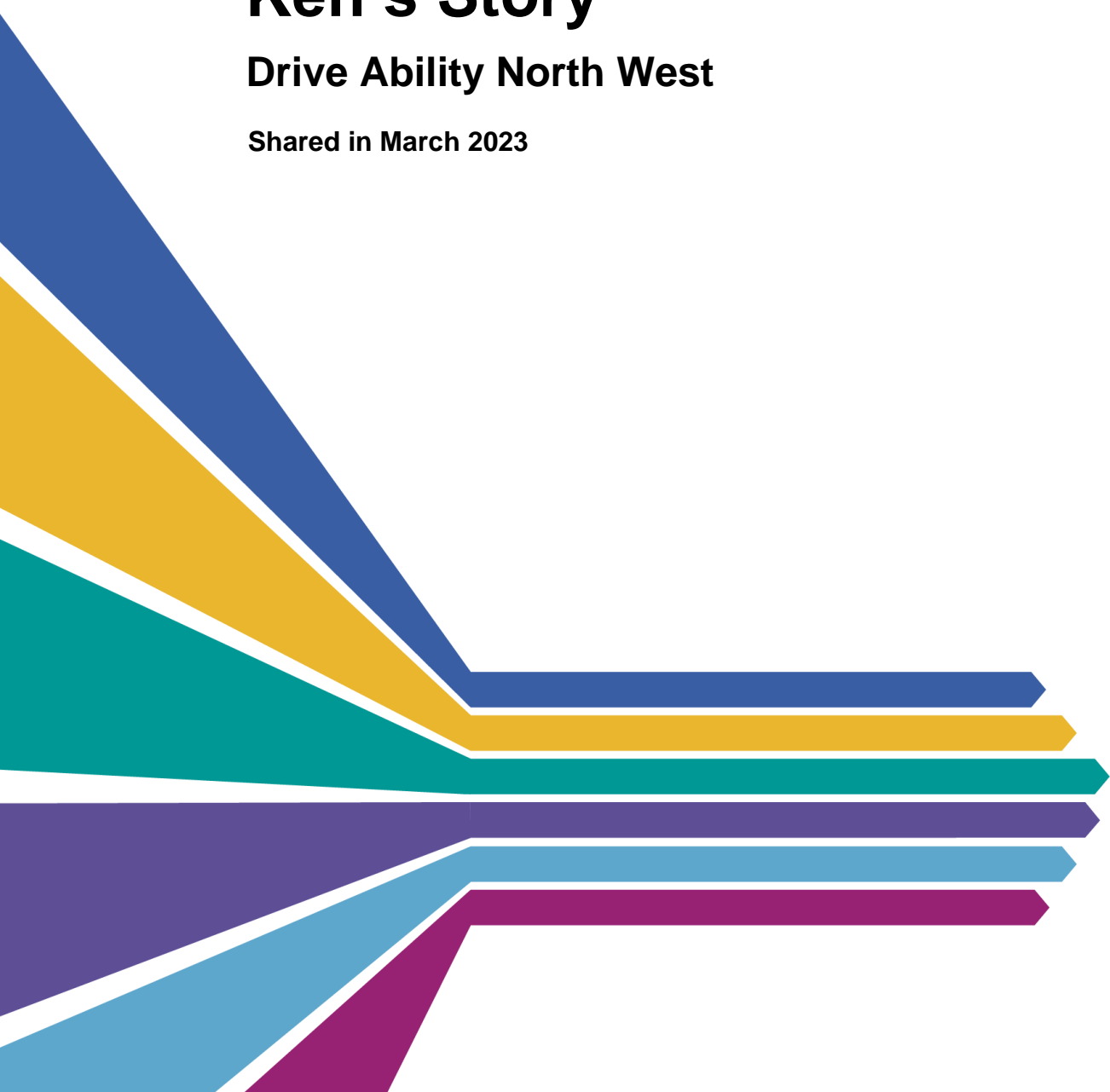


Ken's Story

Drive Ability North West

Shared in March 2023



Drive Ability North West – My Story – Ken

As part of Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Drive Ability North West supports many different people to continue driving and to live an independent life, safely.

Ken, a retired fire fighter and hospital Risk Manager, visited the service for Driving Support and Assessment following ill health. We spoke to Ken and his wife Gail about their experience.



Photo: Ken and Gail (right) with members of the Drive Ability North West team.

Ken, can you tell us a little more about what happened to you?

In 2007 I had a stroke that left me with a brain injury, weakness down my right side and affected my speech and understanding. After a long time in hospital I went home and Gail worked hard to help me with my understanding of things, even using a knife and fork. When I got too tired, she'd take me out for a drive. One day, I picked up the car keys and told her that I was ready to do the driving.

Gail, how did that make you feel?

I was so scared. I had to physically pull the keys off him. I didn't feel he was ready. It was really hard, but we've been married 51 years and I've always been truthful with him.

I remembered a driving service an Occupational Therapist had mentioned and rang them. They gave Ken driving instruction, by that I mean lessons over a period of time, all done according to his own needs and then after the final assessment it turned out

that he was ok to drive. Because he'd been independently assessed I had the confidence that he would be safe, so I was really pleased.

Gail, why did you call Drive Ability North West?

Since his stroke, Ken had had a TIA (a mini stroke) and more recently, a long bout of ill health. He'd been in and out of hospital and hadn't driven for a long time. We knew how important it was that he was safe to drive, so I rang them to see if they could give him driving tuition, which they did, over several weeks and then a final driving assessment.

Ken, how did you feel about the assessment?

I was nervous, but more concerned about what Gail felt - we both needed to know that if I drove, I, she and other people would be safe. On the day, Jabeen, the Approved Driving Instructor, put me at ease, she could see how worried I was, waited until I was completely ready and was so kind and helpful. At the end, when she told me I could still drive, I was so happy.

What would you say to someone thinking of contacting Drive Ability North West?

Anyone in my position, I'd definitely say do it. For me and Gail, they listened to our worries and fears. I can't walk very well, but having the car, it's like a new chapter of life, we can share the driving again, have dinner out, go shopping, it's given me my independence.

But the key thing is that we both know I'm safe to drive and we needed someone independent to say that, or otherwise. Above driving, staying safe on the road was the most important thing, to both of us.

For more information about driving after a stroke, call Drive Ability North West on 01942 483 713.