

Mum's the word for Emma

When Emma suffered a stroke shortly after giving birth to her son, she needed long-term therapy and support.

Here, she tells us about her journey and how the support from ARCOS has helped her to achieve some important functional goals and enabled her to build her independence as a mum.

On 27 July 2016, I gave birth to my first baby, a beautiful little boy named Theo. Two hours later my life was tragically turned upside down when I suffered a large stroke.

After giving birth to Theo, I had to have an operation to remove my placenta. Upon being given the spinal anaesthetic, I had a really severe headache and lost consciousness. My face dropped and my speech became slurred. I was rushed in for a scan which showed that I'd suffered a large bleed (haemorrhage) on the left side of my brain. I'd had a stroke.

The stroke left me with no feeling or movement down my right side. I was unable to speak or understand what had happened to me, and I lost my visual field on the right side of both eyes.

I didn't see Theo for two weeks after he was born and I had to stay in hospital for 12 weeks. I was unable to do any of the things that I'd been looking forward to as a new mum, including breastfeeding, picking him up, cuddling him, putting him to bed, playing with him and everything else that most people take for granted.

My independence as a young mum and a young woman was stolen in one horrible moment.

Every day since I've been fighting to get my independence back. After leaving hospital, the NHS was unable to provide the level of long-term therapy and rehabilitation I needed. Thankfully, we live in Malvern and I found out about ARCOS.

This incredible organisation provided weekly occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. My speech improved massively, meaning I no longer need speech and language therapy, and I have made real improvements to my mobility and the functional ability of my hand.

Life is still hard, but ARCOS is there every step of the way.

From the start, I was encouraged by ARCOS to identify and work towards functional goals – real life activities and tasks that I wanted to improve. For me, this was easy. I wanted to be as



independent a mum as possible. So we worked on how I could lift and carry Theo safely, and even change his nappy!

It's been a long hard struggle but I'm determined to keep going with the support of the amazing therapists at ARCOS. They took the time to get to know me, my husband and Theo, plus our wider support networks.

We feel like part of the family and they gave us hope when we thought there was nowhere to turn.

Theo is now six and, thanks to the support from ARCOS, I am able to walk him to school when I feel able and meet the needs of a growing boy. We even play Mario Kart on the Nintendo Switch together!



ARCOS

**Never say
never**