Activities of daily living
Everyday tasks including washing, dressing, using the toilet, walking and climbing the stairs.

Acute stroke unit
A stroke unit providing acute care in the early stages post-stroke. Treatment and care during the acute phase of stroke are crucial and will include a number of tests to confirm the diagnosis, including a brain scan.

Adaptations
Adaptations to the home can make everyday life safer and easier for people who have had a stroke, and can make it easier for people to get about and live independently. Adaptations can include ramps, rails, stair lifts and wet rooms (adapted shower rooms).

Advocate
An advocate helps people express their views and make informed decisions. An advocate helps people to find out information, explore options and decide for themselves what they want. Advocates can be a voice for the person and encourage them to speak out for themselves. Advocates will never tell people what to do, or allow their own opinions to affect the support they provide. Advocates try to increase a person’s confidence and assertiveness so that they can speak out for themselves. The role of the advocate should not be confused with that of a support worker.

Advocacy
The process of an advocate standing alongside another, speaking on their behalf and encouraging the person to speak up for themselves. Advocacy can help address the imbalance of power in society and stand up to injustice. Advocacy is not just about supporting a person to state their views; it is about supporting a person to exercise their rights.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
The Scottish Government’s Right to Speak strategy documents defines AAC as “any method of communicating that supplements the ordinary methods of speech and handwriting, where these are impaired.”

Aneurysm
A balloon-like bulge in the wall of an artery. The walls of an aneurysm are thin and weak and so they are more likely to burst and cause bleeding in the brain (a haemorrhagic stroke).
Angiography
A type of X-ray used to examine blood vessels. It can help to diagnose conditions that affect the blood vessels and the flow of blood through them. These include aneurysms, coronary heart disease and atherosclerosis (narrowing and hardening of the arteries).

Anticoagulant
A type of medication used to thin the blood. Thinning the blood helps to reduce the risk of blood clots forming and reduces the risk of stroke. Anticoagulants are usually prescribed to reduce the risk of stroke in people with a type of irregular heart beat called atrial fibrillation.

Antiplatelet drugs
A type of blood-thinning medication. They stop the platelets in the blood sticking together and forming clots, which reduces the risk of stroke.

Aphasia
Difficulty speaking (expressive aphasia) or understanding what is said (receptive aphasia) or a combination of the two. It is sometimes called ‘dysphasia’.

Apraxia
The inability to control and co-ordinate movements or carry out complex tasks. It can make everyday activities harder because the person may not be able to do the things they need to do in the right order.

Arrhythmia
An abnormal or irregular heart beat.

Aspiration
Aspiration can occur when someone has difficulty swallowing after a stroke. Food or fluid can enter the lungs through the windpipe, which can cause pneumonia or a lung infection.

Assistive technology
Any product or service which is designed to help disabled people live independently.

Atrial fibrillation (AF)
The most common type of irregular heart beat and a risk factor for stroke. AF increases the chances of blood clots forming in the heart, and these clots can then travel in the blood stream to the brain and cause a stroke. AF is usually treated with anticoagulant medication.

Barthel index
An assessment tool used widely in hospitals to measure how well a person can carry out daily living activities like using the toilet and getting dressed, and how good their mobility is. The assessment can be used to monitor improvements over a period of time.
Bilateral
A term which means involving or affecting both sides. With regards to stroke, it is usually used to describe something that affects both sides of the body, for example weakness.

Binge drinking
Drinking a large amount of alcohol over a short period of time. It is usually defined as drinking more than double the amount of recommended units in a single session (consuming eight or more units for men, and six or more units for women). Binge drinking increases the risk of stroke as it can cause a sharp rise in blood pressure.

Blood pressure
The measure of how strongly the blood presses against the walls of the arteries as it is pumped around the body. It is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). A blood pressure reading has two figures, for example 120/80mmHg. The first figure is the pressure when the heart beats (systolic blood pressure) and the second figure is the pressure between beats (diastolic blood pressure). High blood pressure is the biggest risk factor for stroke.

Blood vessels
Blood vessels form part of the circulatory system that transports blood throughout the body. There are three major types of blood vessels. Arteries carry the blood containing oxygen and nutrients away from the heart out to the rest of the body. Capillaries are tiny blood vessels within the tissues of the body, and veins carry blood containing waste products like carbon dioxide back toward the heart and lungs.

Brainstem
This is the stem-like part of the brain, which links the two halves (hemispheres) of the brain to the spinal cord. It controls the flow of messages between the brain and the rest of the body. The brain stem contains some vital nerve cells involved with breathing, the heart, the eyes and many other important functions. A stroke that occurs in the brainstem can be very serious and can leave someone with locked-in syndrome – where someone is completely paralysed apart from eye movements but they usually have full awareness.

Capacity
Ability to reason, make decisions and consider choices, express views and receive and understand information. To be able to legally consent requires that a person understands the nature, implications and consequences of their decisions. The law assumes that people have capacity unless a doctor’s assessment shows that a person lacks capacity.

A person may be deemed to have capacity in one set of circumstances and not another. Judgements about capacity to consent are time and subject specific – they are made for a particular decision, at a particular moment in time, in particular circumstances.

Cardio-embolic stroke
A stroke due to a blood clot that has formed in the heart and travelled to the brain.
Carer
A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this support. Carers can access Self-directed Support by having a carer’s assessment.

Cardiovascular system
Made up of the heart, blood vessels and blood, it is responsible for transporting oxygen, nutrients, hormones and waste products throughout the body.

Carer’s assessment
Carers who care on a regular and substantial basis and who do not necessarily stay with the cared for person, can at any time request from local authorities a formal assessment of their support needs as a carer. A carer’s assessment can result in the provision of services, either to the cared-for person or in some cases directly to the carer.

Carotid arteries
These are the two large blood vessels at the front of the neck. They carry oxygen-rich blood to the brain. A blockage in a carotid artery is a common cause of stroke. This is more likely if the person has a build-up of fatty deposits in their carotid arteries (atherosclerosis).

Carotid endarterectomy
An operation to clear carotid arteries of fatty deposits. The surgeon makes a small cut in the person’s neck so that they can clear any blockage. It is only recommended if the person has severe blockages as the operation carries a small risk of stroke.

Catheter
A small tube which drains fluid from a part of the body. The main reason to have a catheter after stroke is if the person has lost control of their bladder (incontinence). Doctors can put a tube into the person’s bladder to drain urine into a small bag.

Central post-stroke pain (CPSP)
An effect of stroke where the person has painful burning, throbbing or shooting feelings although there is nothing present that would normally cause pain. Doctors may call this thalamic pain syndrome because it can be caused by damage to the part of the brain called the thalamus. Whilst there is no cure for central post-stroke pain, some medicines can help manage it.

Cerebellum
A part of the brain that sits just underneath the back of the brain and on top of the brainstem. Strokes that damage the cerebellum can result in difficulties with balance or co-ordination.

Cerebral cortex
The outer layer of the brain that is made up of grey-matter (brain cells).
Cerebral haemorrhage
See: Haemorrhagic stroke.

Cerebrum
The largest part of the brain, which includes the cerebral cortex and other areas just below the surface. The cerebrum is important for movement, vision and higher abilities like thinking, memory and talking.

Cholesterol
A fatty substance that is made in the liver and found in some foods. The body needs some cholesterol to make things like vitamins and hormones. But too much cholesterol can result in narrowing of the blood vessels. This increases the risk of stroke. Eating healthily and taking medication called statins can lower cholesterol.

Constraint-induced movement therapy (CIT)
Constraint-induced movement therapy is a kind of physiotherapy involving a sling or strap on the person’s unaffected arm to encourage them to use their affected arm whilst receiving input from a physiotherapist to get the affected arm moving.

Clinical psychologist
Clinical psychologists may provide talking therapy like a counsellor. They also use tests to check if a person’s stroke has affected the way they are thinking and feeling.

Cognitive functions
Anything that involves ‘thinking’ can be described as a cognitive function. This includes remembering, understanding, making decisions and paying attention to information. Many people have difficulty with cognitive functions after stroke.

CT scan
CT stands for computerised tomography and is a type of brain scan. It is a type of X-ray that is used to see what is going on inside the brain. It is particularly good at seeing whether a stroke is caused by a blockage or a bleed. It is a quick and painless test. People who have a suspected stroke should have a CT scan as soon as possible. It is a painless process.

Continence
See: Incontinence.

Co-production
A method of individuals and professionals working together, from the very outset, to achieve an agreed outcome. It is the process of active dialogue and engagement between people who use services and those who provide them. The process for deciding on support through SDS is through co-production.

Cerebro-Vascular Accident (CVA)
Another term for a stroke.
Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)
This is when a blood clot forms in a blood vessel (vein) deep in the body. Usually the clot is in the leg. A DVT can be caused by being inactive for a long time, because this slows the flow of blood. For example, if you have had a stroke you may not be able to move around as much. This can be dangerous because a clot could break off, travel to your lungs and cause a blockage.

Dementia
A condition where damage to the brain causes cognitive problems such as difficulty with memory, understanding and mood. Dementia is a progressive condition. Stroke can cause a type of dementia called vascular dementia.

Diabetes
A condition where the body is not able to process sugar (glucose). Diabetes causes high levels of sugar in the blood. This increases risk of stroke and other problems, like damage to kidneys. There are two types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is when the body does not produce any insulin. Types 2 diabetes, which usually develops in adulthood, is when the body cannot produce enough insulin. Diabetes can be controlled by eating healthily and taking medication if needed.

Diastolic pressure
See: Blood pressure.

Dietitian
A health professional who can give specialist advice about eating a healthy diet, losing weight and managing medical conditions such as diabetes and high cholesterol.

Direct payments
An allocation of funding for Self-directed Support given to users after an assessment for support. It is a cash payment, paid directly to a person (or to a third party) so they can choose and control their own support.

Doppler scan
A type of ultrasound scan. Doctors often use a Doppler scan to check for narrowing of the blood vessels in the neck. The person doing the scan will put a special jelly on the neck and run a probe over it. It is a safe and painless test.

Drop foot
A problem with walking that can be caused by a stroke. It means that the person’s foot is difficult to lift and their toes might catch on the ground. This can increase the risk of tripping and falling.

Dysarthria
Weakness in the muscles that control the mouth, lips, tongue or breathing. This can make speech slower or slurred and can cause problems with swallowing.

Dysphasia
See: Aphasia.
Early supported discharge
Designed for stroke survivors with mild to moderate impairment who can be discharged from hospital sooner to receive the necessary therapy at home.

Echocardiogram
An ultrasound scan of the heart. This is one of the tests used to check for an irregular heartbeat, which is a risk factor for stroke. The person doing the scan will put a special jelly on the person’s chest and run a probe over this. It is a painless process.

Electrocardiogram (ECG)
One of the tests used to check for an irregular heartbeat, which is a risk factor for stroke. Sticky pads, attached to wires, are put on to the person’s chest to measure the electrical activity of their heart. It is a painless process.

Electroencephalogram (EEG)
A test that measures the electrical activity of the brain. It uses sensors attached to the person’s head. It is a painless process.

Embolism
The blockage of a blood vessel by a blood clot or piece of fatty material or other debris in the bloodstream. An embolism is a type of stroke.

Emotionalism
This is something that many people experience after a stroke. It means that the person has very strong and sudden emotional reactions and may cry, or more rarely laugh more often than they did before. These emotional reactions can match what the person is feeling or may seem to happen for little or no reason.

Enteral feeding
Feeding through a tube connected to the person’s stomach. People may need enteral feeding if their stroke has affected their swallowing. A tube may be placed through the person’s nose and down into their stomach (a naso-gastric tube). If the person is unable to swallow for a long time they may need a tube inserted through the wall of their stomach (a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy or PEG tube).

Epilepsy
A condition where someone has repeated seizures, sometimes called fits. Seizures are caused by bursts of electrical activity in the brain. Stroke is one of many conditions that can lead to epilepsy. The seizures can usually be controlled with medication.

Extracranial-intracranial bypass
Surgery to restore blood flow to an area of brain tissue. It involves a healthy artery in the scalp being re-routed to restore the blood supply to the area affected by a blocked or narrowed artery.
FAST test
The FAST test is a simple three-step test that can be used by anyone to recognise when someone is having a stroke. Using the main symptoms of stroke, FAST stands for 'Facial weakness, Arm weakness, Speech problems, Time to call 999'.

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)
A type of brain scan used to study the workings of the brain. This type of MRI scan takes repeated scans, usually one a second, instead of a single scan. The scans are used to follow the movement of blood through the brain, showing which sections are most active and how well the brain is functioning. It can also show which parts of the brain responds to particular activities and tasks. It is a painless process.

Gait
The way a person walks.

Goal setting
The process whereby a health professional and their patient decide on the main objectives for rehabilitation.

Haematoma
A blood clot that forms after bleeding from a burst blood vessel. Haematomas can occur anywhere in the body and can vary from being minor to life threatening. A bleed in the brain (haemorrhagic stroke) can cause a haematoma to form within the skull. This can be dangerous as the skull is not able to expand and it can lead to brain tissue being squashed or a build up of pressure inside the brain.

Haemorrhage
When a blood vessel bursts, causing bleeding into the surrounding tissues.

Haemorrhagic stroke
A type of stroke caused by a blood vessel bursting and bleeding within the brain (intracerebral haemorrhage) or onto the surface of the brain (subarachnoid haemorrhage). The vessel may have burst because of an aneurysm or a tear in a blood vessel. Haemorrhagic strokes are less common than strokes due to a blockage (ischemic strokes), and make up about 15% of all strokes.

Hemianopia
The loss of one half of the visual field which results in not being able to see to either the left or right of the field of vision. It can happen in the right half of each eye known as ‘right homonymous hemianopia’ or in the left half called ‘left homonymous hemianopia’.

Hemiparesis
Weakness of one half of the body. Weakness in an arm, leg or both is probably one of the most common effects of stroke. Weakness can vary in severity, from mild, where it only affects one part of the body to severe where it affects the whole side of the body.
Hemiplegia
The term hemiplegia is used to describe paralysis of one side of the body. It differs from hemiparesis (weakness on one side of the body) as it describes the total loss of ability to move a part of the body.

Hughes Syndrome
Hughes Syndrome is an autoimmune condition, which means the immune system attacks healthy tissue instead of protecting it from infection and illness. This condition makes blood more likely to form clots and so it increases the risk of stroke. Approximately one in five cases of stroke in people under 45 is associated with this condition, which can usually be treated. It is also known as Antiphospholipid Syndrome (APS).

Hydrocephalus
The build up of fluid on the brain. The excess fluid puts pressure on the brain causing a variety of symptoms such as headaches, blurred vision and problems walking. Hydrocephalus can occur after a stroke caused by bleeding on the surface of the brain (a subarachnoid haemorrhage). Treatment includes shunt surgery, whereby a thin tube (a shunt) is implanted in the brain and the excess fluid is drained to a different part of the body, usually the abdomen.

Hyper-acute stroke unit
Specialist centres to manage the first 72 hours of stroke care.

Hypercholesterolemia
High levels of cholesterol in the blood. The ideal cholesterol level in the blood is less than 5mmol/l. If a person’s cholesterol level is between 5 to 6.4mmol/l this is considered to be mildly high cholesterol. Moderately high cholesterol is 6.5 to 7.8mmol/l and very high cholesterol is 7.8 and above.

Hypertension
The medical term for high blood pressure. This is when the pressure of blood flowing through blood vessels is too high (consistently higher than 140/90mmHg). High blood pressure usually has no symptoms and is the single biggest risk factor for stroke.

Hypotension
The medical term for low blood pressure. This is when the pressure of blood flowing through blood vessels is too low (consistently less than 90/60mmHg).

Impairment
A general term used to describe loss of function such as weakness in an arm or leg, loss of sensation, loss of speech, or visual problems.

Inattention
See: Neglect.
Incontinence
Loss of control of the bladder, bowel, or both (which is called double incontinence). Continence problems can develop for different reasons and there are many different types of continence problems. About half of people admitted to hospital with stroke will have lost control of their bladder and a third will experience loss of bowel control.

Independent advocacy organisation
Advocacy organisation that is structurally, financially and psychologically separate from service providers and other services.

Independent living
Disabled people having the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as other citizens at home, at work, and in the community. It does not mean the person living by themselves or fending for themselves. It means rights to practical assistance and support to participate in society and live an ordinary life.

Individual budget
An allocation of funding for Self-directed Support given to users after an assessment for support. The assessment of the budget should be a transparent process that demonstrates compliance with community care and other legislation.

Individual service fund
Option two of Self-directed Support – the person selects the support they want and their local authority, or an organisation of the person’s choice, arranges the support.

Infarct/infarction
An infarction can happen anywhere in the body, but in relation to stroke, it describes an area of brain tissue that has not received its blood supply and as a result it has been damaged. An infarct can be tiny or affect a larger part of the brain.

Insulin
A hormone produced by cells in the pancreas (a gland behind the stomach). When glucose enters our blood following a meal the pancreas should automatically produce the right amount of insulin to move glucose into our cells so it can be used as energy. Insulin also controls the levels of glucose in our body, therefore stopping a build up of it. Problems producing insulin can result in diabetes.

Intracerebral haemorrhage
See: Haemorrhagic stroke.

Ischaemia
An inadequate blood supply to an organ or tissue, usually a result of vessel walls being narrowed due to a build up of fatty material (atherosclerosis).

Ischaemic penumbra
A stroke causes some brain cells to die and others to become injured. The injured cells are often found around the main area of damage. This area of injured cells is known as the penumbra. These cells may heal in the first few days and weeks after the stroke which can cause some spontaneous recovery.
Ischaemic stroke
This type of stroke happens when a clot blocks an artery carrying blood to the brain. They account for around 85% of all strokes. It can be caused when a blood clot forms in a main artery to the brain (cerebral thrombosis), from a blood clot which is formed elsewhere in the body and travels to the brain via the circulatory system (a cerebral embolism); or when the tiny blood vessels deep within the brain become blocked (a lacunar stroke).

Lacunar stroke/lacunar infarct
A blockage in the tiny blood vessels deep within the brain which causes around 25% of ischaemic strokes. Some people experience silent lacunar strokes, which have no symptoms and they may only be discovered when having a brain scan for another reason.

Left hemisphere
The brain has two sides, known as the left hemisphere and right hemisphere, each controlling different functions. Amongst other things, the left side usually controls speech and writing, as well as controlling movement on the right side of the body.

Magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) scan
This type of MRI scan is used to look at blood vessels in the body. Sometimes special dye is injected into the body to help make the images clearer. An MRA scan can help diagnose aneurysms. It is a painless process.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan
A type of scan that uses strong magnetic fields and radio waves, instead of X-rays, to take detailed pictures of the inside of the body. The patient lies inside the MRI scanner surrounded by a series of powerful magnets. It provides detailed structural information on any part of the body including the brain. It can show inflammation and bleeding. It is a painless process.

Multi-infarct dementia (MID)
Multi-infarct dementia is the most common form of vascular dementia. It is caused by multiple mini strokes that take place over time giving rise to many tiny, widespread areas of damage. These strokes are so small that a person may not notice any symptoms or the symptoms may not last very long, they are sometimes called ‘silent strokes’.

Migraine
A severe headache, usually felt at the front or on the side of the head. Often felt as a throbbing pain, some people also experience nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to light. There might be warning symptoms beforehand that usually affect eyesight and is known as an "aura".

MRI scan
See: Magnetic resonance imaging.
Muscle tone
The degree of natural tension in a person’s muscles. Abnormally high muscle tone can lead to muscle tightness and stiffness (spasticity). Very low muscle tone can cause floppiness (hypotonia).

Naso-gastric (NG) tube
See: Enteral feeding.

Neglect
Not being aware of one side of the body and/or environment. It is also referred to as ‘inattention’. The person might not be aware of being touched on one side or not see things on one side. In extreme cases, an individual may not be aware that their arm or leg on the affected side belongs to them.

Neurology
The study of medicine that treats diseases and disorders of the nervous system which includes the brain, spinal cord and nerves throughout the body. It includes disorders like stroke, epilepsy and degenerative conditions like Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease.

Neuron
The term for a nerve cell. The nervous system contains billions of neurons with three main types, sensory, motor and interneurons. If the cell body of a neuron is damaged the cell dies and is never replaced.

Neuroplasticity
The ability of undamaged parts of the brain to take over the jobs of damaged areas.

Non-instructed advocacy
Where a person who needs an independent advocate cannot tell the advocate what they want.

Nystagmus
Continuous uncontrolled movement of the eyes. There are different types of nystagmus, the most common being jerky nystagmus, where the eyes move slowly in one direction followed by a fast corrective jerking movement in the other direction. The movement can be in any direction and is a sign of a problem with the visual system or the part of the brain responsible for eye movements.

Occupational therapist (OT)
Healthcare professionals who can help a person find ways of carrying out the tasks of everyday living. This can include tasks such as getting washed and dressed. They may also be able to help the person return to their hobbies and can advise on returning to work.
Ombudsman
An organisation that carries out independent investigations into complaints. Complaints about public services in Scotland are reviewed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Ophthalmologist
A registered doctor who specialises in investigating and treating eye conditions. They can also assess whether a person qualifies to register their sight loss as sight impaired (partially sighted) or severely sight impaired (blind). This can make it easier for the person to get support and entitles the person to certain concessions.

Orthoptist
Orthoptists investigate, diagnose and treat defects of binocular vision and abnormalities of eye movements. They work alongside ophthalmologists as part of the eye team and in some hospitals are members of the multi-disciplinary stroke team.

Paralysis
Complete loss of the ability to move muscles. After a stroke, paralysis usually happens on one side of the body. If one whole side of the body is paralysed, this is called hemiplegia.

Percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG)
See: Enteral feeding.

Personalisation
Enables the individual alone, or in groups, to find the right solutions for them and to participate in the delivery of a service. From being a recipient of services, citizens can become actively involved in selecting and shaping the services they receive.

Pharmacist
A healthcare professional who provides the medication prescribed by a doctor. They may also offer testing and screening for common conditions such as blood pressure and can advise about minor ailments such as colds.

Physiotherapist
A trained healthcare professional who specialises in treating physical problems such as weakness and paralysis. They use a variety of techniques such as exercises, and can advise about equipment that can help in a person’s rehabilitation.

Platelets
Small cell-like particles found in the blood. They help the blood clotting process by clumping together to form a plug. They also release substances that promote clotting.

Plaque
Fat, cholesterol, and other substances which have built up in the walls of our arteries and formed hard structures. These plaques can make arteries narrower and increase the risk of stroke.
Positron emission tomography (PET) scan
A scan which produces a detailed three-dimensional picture of the inside of the body. PET scans are used to diagnose conditions that affect the working of the brain such as dementia. Before having the scan, a radioactive substance is passed into the body (by injection, inhaler or tablet). This gives off particles, which release a type of radiation called gamma rays, which are detected by the scanner.

Psychiatrist
A medically qualified doctor who specialises in the study and treatment of mental health problems. They can prescribe medication.

Psychologist
A person qualified in the scientific study of the mind. A clinical psychologist is trained in assessing and treating people with mental health problems such as depression. They can also help people experiencing cognitive problems after stroke.

Psychotherapist
A person qualified in psychotherapy who uses methods including one-to-one talking sessions to therapies that use techniques such as role-play or dance to help explore people’s emotions.

Recombinant tissue plasminogen activator (rt-PA)
The drug most commonly used for thrombolysis. It breaks down blood clots and so can reverse the damage done by the stroke, but it must be given within four and a half hours of a stroke happening.

Rehabilitation
Support to recover and adapt to the impact of illnesses and long term conditions. It usually involves specific therapies such as physiotherapy, speech and language therapy or occupational therapy and often involves exercises to help the person recover any abilities they have lost and learn new techniques to compensate for any lasting effects.

Rehab stroke unit
A ward or dedicated area in hospital staffed by nurses and therapists with experience in stroke rehabilitation.

Respite care
Care given to someone for a short period, usually away from their own home, so their carer can have a break from their caring responsibilities.

Retinal stroke
A stroke that happens when there is a blockage in one of the blood vessels to the eye. People who have a retinal stroke may have been aware of some blurring or black-outs of vision in one eye before their stroke.
Risk factors (for stroke)
Factors that increase the chances of a stroke happening. They include things that we cannot change such as our age and ethnicity, medical conditions which can be treated such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and an irregular heart rhythm, and lifestyle factors which can be changed such as smoking, drinking too much alcohol, an unhealthy diet and lack of exercise.

Self-directed Support (SDS)
A term that describes the ways in which individuals and families can have informed choice about how their support is provided to them. It is most commonly used in the delivery of social care and support but it can cover a much wider range of services.

Sickle cell anaemia
An inherited blood disorder in which red blood cells develop abnormally. It is more common among African-Caribbean people. Instead of being round and flexible they become shaped like a crescent (sickle). These abnormal blood cells can then block blood vessels causing episodes of pain called a sickle crisis. Sickle cell anaemia is a risk factor for stroke.

Social worker
Help people to manage at home, carrying out assessments and arranging for support in the community. This help could include carers to provide practical help or aids and equipment at home.

Speech and language therapist (SLT)
A therapist who specialises in helping people with communication support needs after stroke including dysarthria (weakness of the muscles in the mouth) and aphasia (difficulty speaking or understanding what is said). They can help you to improve your communication skills and find alternative ways of communicating. They can also assess people and offer advice on swallowing problems.

Statin
A type of medication used to lower cholesterol, which can reduce the risk of stroke. The following statins are currently used in the UK: atorvastatin, fluvastatin, pravastatin, rosuvastatin and simvastatin.

Stenosis (of an artery)
Stenosis means narrowing. If an artery has become narrowed, it increases the risk of stroke as there is a greater chance of it becoming blocked.

Stroke unit
A ward or dedicated area in a hospital staffed by nurses and therapists with experience in stroke treatment. It has been shown that people admitted to a stroke unit have a higher chance of surviving than those admitted elsewhere in hospital.

Subarachnoid haemorrhage
See: Haemorrhagic stroke.

Systolic pressure
See: Blood pressure.
**Thalamus**
A part of the brain. Information about sensation from the body passes though the thalamus before reaching the cortex, the main part of the brain involved in complex tasks.

**Thrombolysis**
An early treatment for some types of strokes caused by a blood clot. Thrombolysis is a procedure that involves being given a drug called recombinant tissue plasminogen activator (rt-PA). This drug breaks down blood clots and so can reverse the damage done by the stroke, but it must be given within four and a half hours of the stroke happening.

**Thrombosis**
A blood clot that forms in an artery.

**Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS)**
A procedure which involves applying a magnetic current to parts of the brain to promote recovery.

**Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA)**
The symptoms of a TIA are very similar to those of a stroke, but they only last for a short time, sometimes only a few minutes or hours. The person always recovers completely within 24 hours (if not it is a stroke). TIAs are sometimes called 'mini strokes'.

**Ultrasound**
A painless test which involves using sound waves to produce pictures of the inside of the body. It can help to diagnose a variety of conditions for example problems with the heart’s structure or heart valves, or a weakness in an artery wall (called an aneurysm).

**Urologist**
A surgeon who specialises in diseases of the bladder, kidneys and prostate. They can diagnose, assess and treat conditions like incontinence.

**Vertebral artery dissection (VAD)**
A tear in the walls of an artery at the back of the neck (for example because of an injury such as whiplash). Blood can then get between the layers of artery walls and this can lead to a clot forming, causing a blockage (a stroke).

**Video fluoroscopy**
A procedure that involves taking a series of x-ray images of the parts of the body involved in swallowing. It can help to identify what is wrong and what strategies may help.

**Visual field loss**
The loss of sight in a particular area of visual field (the area a person can see without moving their eyes or your head, from straight ahead to out to the side).