

Early Learning & Evaluation

The new Stroke Association Connect service has been piloted in several areas of England and Scotland over the last few weeks. A brief summary of early learning and evaluation findings is provided below.

Accessing the service

The Stroke Association Connect service received **221 referrals** for stroke survivors from **24 clinical teams** during the pilot phase.

Some teams **experienced delays in setting up referral pathways** for a range of reasons, including; messages not being disseminated in a timely manner, competing priorities or needing to work through local information governance processes. Throughout, the SA Connect team have been on hand to support with any referral pathway queries.

SA Connect call content

While the service aims to establish the foundations for service users to access support on an ongoing basis, Stroke Association Connectors will also ask if the person has any immediate concerns on their mind at the time of the call that they would like to discuss.

Topics most frequently arising so far are: understanding stroke and its impacts, fatigue, financial and work-related concerns. Others include keeping active at home, how to spot and reduce the risk of a further stroke, support for carers and practical issues within the home.

Service users have **infrequently raised concerns of a clinical nature** and, where they have, appointments with clinical professionals have often already been in place.

Making the SA Connect calls

Successful contact was made with service users **80% of the time**. Where contact was unsuccessful, this was frequently due to incorrect phone numbers being provided upon referral.

The Connectors have **spoken directly with the stroke survivor** in the vast majority of cases. Follow-up information has been provided 50:50 between post and email.

SA Connect call content

Despite some early indications that the calls (2 days from referral) may be too soon after people leave hospital, we do not yet have evidence to warrant a change. T

Timing was a key question asked in our call back interviews with service users and **none felt the Connector had called too soon after they left hospital**.

However, we will continue to keep this under close review as, while the calls may not be 'too soon', there may still be a more optimal time. Calls are being effectively delivered within the allocated **20 minutes**.

Early Learning & Evaluation

Feedback from service users

The intended outcomes associated with Stroke Association Connect are that people affected by stroke:

- Understand more about stroke and are reassured that they are not alone.
- Are more supported- they know about the ongoing support available to them from the Stroke Association and other organisations.
- They know how to access the support available to them according to their needs.
- Have current information about how to look after themselves during COVID-19 in the context of their stroke.

Based on our call back interviews (with 10% of all service users), while some stroke survivors remain confused, the majority reported immediate outcomes, particularly with regards to reassurance. Some illustrative quotes are provided below. In only one case did a service user indicate that the SA Connect call unnerved them: *"I want to move on not dwell on it, I want to go back to normal."*

"I felt lost until she gave me a ring."

"It was really hard after getting him from hospital. I thought oh my God, I hope I'm doing the right things. So I found it therapeutic, being able to have a chat. I felt very comfortable talking to [X] and I know there is help out there."

"He explained a lot of things to me. I didn't feel so anxious. I have been feeling very bad because of this corona situation. I have been finding it hard to come to terms with what has happened to me, but I know I can look at the website; there is all the information there."

"It's reassuring to know there are people out there who can help."

Feedback from Stroke Association Connectors

The Stroke Association Connectors report feeling confident that the service is achieving its intended outcomes for people affected by stroke. They highlight that, to date, calls have been welcome by services users and that, in most cases, the information they provide is felt to be of immediate benefit to the service user.

"There have been positive comments e.g. "Thank you, I really appreciate the call", and "I'm glad that I know about this". ... The overall feeling is that those we are contacting are grateful to be made aware of the support and services that are available even if not needed at this point in time."

"Although the number of calls made to date are not high, there have been positive comments e.g. "Thank you, I really appreciate the call", and "I'm glad that I know about this"."