

# Quality Account 2022/2023

**Stroke**  
Association



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# Accessible summary



The Stroke Association is the UK's **leading charity** supporting people to rebuild their lives after **stroke**.

We believe everyone deserves to live the **best life** they can **after stroke**.

The Stroke Association provides **services** to **support people affected by stroke**.



This **report** is about the funded **services** that we provide in **local communities**.

The **quality** of our **support services** is very **important** to us.

We are **proud** of the **services** that we deliver and we know that we can **do more**.



We want to continue to **improve**.

We are committed to **listening** to people affected by stroke and **acting on feedback**.

This report **looks at areas** where we can **improve** the **quality** of our services:



## Safety

By looking at our approach to consent.

We want people affected by stroke to understand the choices they are making.

This helps us to give the **right support** at the **right time**.



## Effectiveness

By helping people who have **communication difficulties** after stroke to **understand** what has happened to them.

We will provide two new **information guides** about stroke and communication in an **aphasia friendly format**.



## Experience

By **involving** more **people affected by stroke** in our work. To help us to make **better decisions** and provide **better support**.

We also **look back** at **2022/2023** to see how well we have done in the areas we said we wanted to improve last year.

# Statement from CEO and Chair of Trustees

We are delighted to be sharing the Stroke Association's second Quality Account. Our values of 'believing in better' and 'giving our all' spur us on to be proud of the support we provide, while always knowing that there's room for us to add even more value to the lives of the people we're here to serve.

This year we have the opportunity to reflect on our achievements during 2022/2023, as well as setting out some of the areas that we are focusing on during 2023/2024 to continue to improve the quality of our commissioned services.

Quality is central to all that we do. It is embedded throughout the direct support we provide as part of the Life After Stroke pathway, as well as the enabling processes and systems we have in place to ensure support is delivered in a way that's effective, safe and offers a positive experience for people affected by stroke.

During the coming year we are excited to see how our Quality Framework drives quality improvements in practice and how we harness the learnings from this to continuously and proactively improve the support that we provide.

We're deeply committed to ensuring that the voice of people affected by stroke is at the heart of everything that we do. We want to ensure that we're listening to stroke survivors and carers and acting on what they tell us.

We have made great strides in this area with the establishment of our Involvement Network and piloting our new feedback approach, Ask and Act. Throughout 2023/2024 we plan to continue to grow our Involvement Network and review the feedback from people affected by stroke to embed the culture of continual improvement that we are committed to.

This year we are extremely proud to have worked on a ground breaking project in partnership with NHS England to undertake the first ever national survey capturing patient experience of stroke care – the Stroke Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs). The survey findings will be available in September 2023 and will inform quality improvement activity at local, regional, and national level across the entire stroke pathway from acute through to community-based care, and employment before and after stroke. As an organisation we welcome the opportunity to hear directly from stroke survivors and the findings will enable us to identify ongoing quality

improvements to the Life After Stroke Services that we are commissioned to deliver.

Every Spring, as a charity we plan our priorities for the year ahead aligning to our two strategic goals:

- Make stroke the priority it needs to be
- Ensure that everyone affected by stroke has access to the rehabilitation and lifelong support they need

As a charity we are here to ensure that everyone affected by stroke has access to the rehabilitation and lifelong support they need. We have big ambitions over the coming years to reach and add value to the lives of every newly diagnosed stroke survivor. To achieve our ambitions, we know further embedding of the culture of continual improvement leading to high quality services is vital.

This Quality Account outlines some of the ways that we will achieve our ambitions throughout the coming year.

Our Locality Support Products Team has led on compiling this report. We confirm that this is an accurate account.



Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen King'.

**Stephen King,**  
Chair of Trustees

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Juliet Bouverie'.

**Juliet Bouverie,**  
Chief Executive

# Who we are

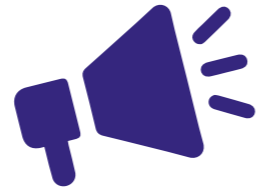
The Stroke Association is the UK's leading charity supporting people to rebuild their lives after stroke. We believe everyone deserves to live the best life they can after stroke.

Stroke strikes every five minutes. Sadly it continues to be one of the leading causes of death in the UK. It is estimated that there are around 100,000 people who have a stroke each year and there are 1.3 million stroke survivors in the UK.



## Our vision

is for there to be fewer strokes, and for people affected by stroke to get the help they need to live the best life they can.



## Our core purpose

is to be the trusted voice of stroke survivors and their families. We want to drive better outcomes in stroke prevention, treatment and lifelong support for everyone affected by stroke.

We are human

We believe in better

We give our all

We say it how it is



## We are human

We've seen the full range of human emotions that stroke brings out. We put ourselves in the shoes of the people we support. Recognising and promoting everyone's individuality with kindness. We embrace this to achieve the best possible outcomes for stroke survivors, our charity and our partners.



## We say it how it is

Working together, we set realistic but challenging goals for ourselves and the people we support. Listening to everyone's needs. So we can deliver what we said we would. And we aren't afraid to show people the devastation that stroke causes. And what people can do to help those affected live their best life after stroke.



## We believe in better

We're optimistic for the future. For the people living through the devastating effects of stroke, ourselves and our charity. Driven by our desire for improvement, however big or small. To focus on the possibilities for a better future. To learn from mistakes. And move forward stronger than before.



## We give it our all

Our resolve to make a difference motivates everyone we work with. With one eye on the bigger picture, we harness our passion and expertise to get them as fired up as we are. So we can continue to empower people affected by stroke to retake control of their lives and speak up for themselves. And champion their needs when they can't.



Find out more about who we are and what we do on [stroke.org.uk](https://stroke.org.uk).



## Our Commissioned Life After Stroke Services

Our commissioned services support people to rebuild their lives after stroke. The impact of stroke often lasts a lifetime, and we know that people's needs change over time. We believe everyone deserves to live the best life they can after stroke.

Stroke can impact work, relationships, confidence, self-esteem, independence, financial position, decision-making abilities, housing needs, ability to drive and social life to name but a few. It is critical that people affected by stroke receive the support they need in the long-term to rebuild their lives and lead the best life possible.



Across the UK we deliver **159 commissioned life after stroke services**. During 2022/2023 we've provided meaningful support face-to-face, over the phone and online for thousands of people affected by stroke.

Our Stroke Association Support Coordinators:



Have connected **38,145 people** affected by stroke to our organisation and support.



Are supporting **40,426 people** and providing ongoing support.



Handled **77,265 calls**, giving over **1,800 days** of telephone support.



Had **510 video calls**, giving nearly **400 hours** of digital support.

Depending on the level of funding we receive and local identified needs, we provide a range of life after stroke service offers.



# Stroke Recovery Service

The Stroke Association Stroke Recovery Service provides and coordinates the longer-term personalised support that people affected by stroke need to rebuild their lives in their communities and prevent further stroke. The service supports people affected by stroke to navigate the stroke pathway and the wider care system, understanding the support available to them and how it can be accessed.

We work alongside people affected by stroke to develop and deliver personalised support, based on what's important to them, providing emotional and practical support to help to adjust to the changes brought about by stroke. Regular reviews ensure that we can adapt our support to best meet the changing needs of people affected by stroke over time. We provide high quality personalised information and tools for individuals to self-manage to support recovery and life after stroke.



## Post Stroke Reviews

Stroke survivors' experiences and needs change over time. We provide reviews at 6 and 12-months post stroke. Reviews help to identify any unmet needs at these points. This review ensures appropriate, person centred, tailored support is provided to assist re-integration into the community and maximise the quality of life experienced by stroke survivors, their carer/s and families.

This formal check in point can also be a reminder of what the stroke survivor has achieved, a valuable opportunity to reflect on the journey the person affected by stroke has had and encourage them to be fully invested in rebuilding their life after stroke.

## Communication Support Service

Our Communication Support Service helps stroke survivors who have communication difficulties following a stroke. Our coordinators and volunteers work with stroke survivors to provide opportunities to practice new communication skills and rebuild confidence, to reduce the impact of their difficulties.

The Communication Support Service ensures that people affected by stroke receive the vital support they need. This includes tackling the additional barriers faced by those living with communication difficulties when navigating the health and social care system and reintegrating back into their community.

## Emotional Support Service

Our Emotional Support Service helps those affected by stroke come to terms with what has happened to them. The service is for stroke survivors and carers who require specialist emotional support interventions at level 2 of the Stepped Care Model for psychological interventions after stroke and is provided by qualified counsellors.

The service encourages stroke survivors to explore issues such as loss and adjustment, relationships, understanding guilt and anger and building confidence and self-esteem.



# Priorities for Improvements 2023/2024

## Safety

The safety and wellbeing of the people that we support is crucial. We want to ensure that people affected by stroke can move seamlessly between our different offers so that they receive the right support at the right time. To do this we need to capture the right consent consistently. All our staff need to have the same understanding about what consent they are asking for and what this means. This will allow us to communicate with people affected by stroke clearly and accurately about what they are consenting to.

This year we will review how consent is obtained, recorded and used across our support & services, with people affected by stroke.

## Why do we want to improve this?

We offer a range of different types of support and services to people affected by stroke. Our offers have been developed over time, which has led to variations in processes and supporting guidance for staff capturing consent.

## What do we want to achieve?

- ✓ A single consent statement that can be applied across all our services.
- ✓ Our staff have a consistent understanding of how to ask for and capture consent.
- ✓ People affected by stroke are aware of what they are consenting to and how they may withdraw their consent.

## What is our plan for 2023/2024?

- To complete a full review of all our existing consent statements.
- Audit all our consent information and guidance.
- Produce updated consent statements and supporting guidance.
- Develop and deliver improved staff training.
- Respond to feedback from people affected by stroke.

## Who have we involved in this work?

This work is being jointly led and implemented by people in different roles and teams across our organisation. This includes our Compliance Lead, Head of Universal Support Products, Head of Locality Products and Associate Director of Legal & Governance/Data Protection Officer.

## How will we measure improvements?

We will be measuring the success of this work in several different ways:

**Training compliance** to ensure that our staff attend updated training session that will be developed.

**Staff feedback** from conversations in 1-1 discussions and responses to our staff engagement survey.

**Record keeping** on our electronic database. We will be monitoring how consent is captured.

**Observing practice** to confirm that our staff can explain consent confidently and in a clear and understandable way.

**Stroke survivor feedback** by telling us whether they understand our offers, and the ways that we may be able to support them.

## Effectiveness

Communication difficulties are very common after a stroke, affecting around two thirds of stroke survivors. 40% of stroke survivors have aphasia soon after their stroke, a language and communication disorder caused by damage to the language centres of the brain. Aphasia affects the ability to speak, write, read or understand what others say. Many of those affected will remain severely affected in the long term. It is estimated that around 350,000 people in the UK are living with aphasia.

There is limited information about stroke and communication difficulties that is written in an aphasia friendly way.

## Why do we want to improve this?

People with communication problems have told us that they don't always understand what has happened to them. They find it difficult to understand and remember what they have been told about their stroke and their communication difficulties. This can lead to anxiety, confusion, isolation and low mood for many people.

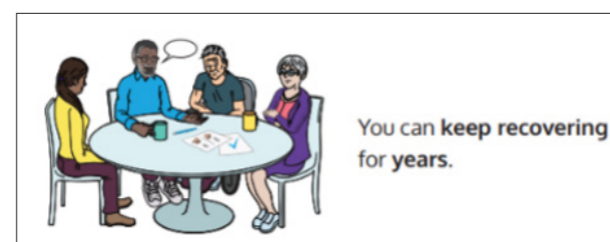
## What do we want to achieve?

We plan to launch two new information guides in an aphasia friendly format, using our newly created accessible image library.

1. Stroke - an aphasia friendly guide
2. Your communication after a stroke - an aphasia friendly guide

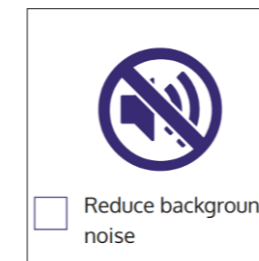


The guides follow the design principles of aphasia friendly materials and will use our new accessible images to support the understanding of the words.



We have worked with people affected by aphasia to create characters for the guides. The characters have been designed to be diverse and inclusive.

We have also developed new icons to support understanding. Here's an example:



The guides will enable people affected by a communication problem to understand what has happened to them, giving them more ownership of their condition and therefore more confidence to communicate with others. We anticipate that, along with the support available from our Communication Support Services, they will contribute towards reducing feelings of anxiety and confusion.

## Who have we involved in this work?

We have worked with people with aphasia, health care professionals including speech and language therapists and our own staff to create the new aphasia-friendly guides together. More than sixty people with aphasia have been involved in this work.

Creating the guides together with people affected by stroke was at the heart of the process. Feedback from people affected by communication problems has been vital to decide what is included in the guides and how they look. The views of people affected by communication problems after stroke have really helped to inform our final product.

**"I wish I had a guide like this when I was in hospital. It would have given me the right information in the way I needed it."  
(Stroke Survivor)**

## What is our plan for 2023/2024?

The guides will be launched during our 2023 May Integrated Campaign, which aims to raise awareness of aphasia and our support. The guides will be available in English and Welsh and will be available to order or download for free from our website.

## How will we measure improvements?

We will evaluate the new guides using a questionnaire which will be sent out with the guides. We will seek feedback about the look of the guides, what is included and how people have benefitted from them. We will use this information to make changes to improve the guides. We also want to understand when people benefit most from this information on their stroke recovery journey so that we can learn from this to help other people more effectively too.





## Experience

At the Stroke Association we are committed to involving people affected by stroke in our work. For us involvement means doing things with people with lived experience of stroke, rather than to or for them.

Involvement is all about including the views and opinions of people affected by stroke in our work and our decision making. Hearing from people with lived experience provides a unique and vital perspective for us and increases our understanding of stroke and its impacts.

Over the past year we have worked hard to establish our Stroke Views Involvement Network. This is a network of over 400 people with lived experience of stroke who work on projects with different teams at the Stroke Association. The network has helped us with a range of things including:

- Designing videos to help families, friends and stroke survivors better understand stroke.
- Making improvements to our website.
- Helping us to create new stroke information based on real stroke experience including brain fog and stroke, women and stroke and smoking and the risk of stroke.

## Why do we want to improve this?

Involvement has a range of benefits for us as an organisation and for the people who choose to get involved.

As an organisation involvement helps us to:

- ✓ Make better decisions.
- ✓ Understand what is important to people affected by stroke.
- ✓ Provide more accessible, inclusive and effective support services.
- ✓ Ensures our work is evidence-based.

People who get involved have told us that they have benefitted from being able to give something back - using their skills and feeling valued, to make a meaningful contribution.

Our vision for involvement at the Stroke Association is 'the expertise of people affected by stroke shapes decisions at the Stroke Association'. This requires a commitment to listen to and act on the views of people affected by stroke. We want the voice of lived experience to shine through in all our work.

## What is our plan for 2023/2024?

We have begun to establish long-term involvement groups in each of our ten locality areas called Locality Stroke Voices. The aim of these groups is to support us to make decisions around local priorities.

We currently have four groups (East of England, Midlands, Wales and Scotland) and aim to set up other local groups throughout 2023-2024. This will ensure that we are listening to the voice of lived experience in all our local areas.

We also hope to grow the number of projects we are able to offer to the Stroke Views Involvement Network to include the voices and opinions of people affected by stroke more often in our work.

Growing our involvement projects and the number of Locality Stroke Voices groups will have many benefits including:

- Bringing a unique and essential perspective to our work.
- Ensuring we are providing services that are accessible and useful.
- Helping us make better decisions by understanding what is important to people affected by stroke.
- Giving our organisation more credibility by ensuring that our work is backed by better evidence, making it more effective.

- Helping to keep our staff connected to the issues people affected by stroke are facing.
- Allowing us access to the skills and expertise of a wide range of people.

Feedback from recently involved people:

"I gained a sense of purpose."

"It's fantastic to play a role in creating a video that will help other survivors."

"I met people with similar experiences, worked with a dedicated team from the Stroke Association - I gained insight, more knowledge and felt that my lived experience provided some value - I wasn't just a survivor anymore but also someone who could perhaps impart knowledge and hope to others."

"Very pleased to feel my views are being aired, listened too. Not being ignored because of my disability."

## Who is involved in this work?

The Stroke Views Involvement Network is managed by the Involvement Team, but the original design was created with the support of a group of eight people affected by stroke.

The Locality Stroke Voices group are led by our local teams and are set up using guidance created by staff and people affected by stroke.

## How will we measure improvements?

We will see an increase in the number of areas that have their Locality Stroke Voices group up and running.

From existing groups, we will see evidence of how they have contributed to our 2024/2025 plans and of the work they have been involved in throughout the 2023/2024 year. We will track the numbers of projects completed by the network throughout each quarter and the year.



# Looking back over the last 12 months

## Safety

### What did we say we would do?

It is essential that our staff and volunteers are provided with high quality training to be able to carry out their roles safely and effectively when they are supporting people affected by stroke. To improve this we will ensure that our staff and volunteers can access our new training system, LEARN, and improve the quality of our training courses.

### How did we do?

**Experience and Access:** LEARN has a single sign on functionality and is much simpler and more user friendly than our old training system. Feedback from staff and volunteers has been very positive.

**Compliance:** Staff and volunteers now receive an automatic reminder directly from LEARN when they need to retake a training course. Managers can now easily confirm which courses their teams have completed making this much easier to track and follow up.

**Content:** We have replaced the old compulsory training modules with newer and more challenging ones. We've also added a lot of new content to improve the accessibility of modules and resources that go alongside these. In the last 12 months we have added over 75 new lessons in nearly 40 new courses aimed at our staff.



**Volunteers:** All our volunteers who have provided us with an email address now automatically get set up with a LEARN account. Our volunteers are automatically sent a welcome email with details of how to access the new system. We have increased the number of training courses available to our volunteers from six to twenty-six. Most recently, the People Development team have been supporting volunteer managers and Engagement Officers to help support more volunteers to get on to Learn.

**Access:** Engagement with LEARN (as measured by unique log ins each day) has seen improvement both for staff and volunteers. This has improved by 67% when compared with our old training system.

## Plans for further work

We will be continuing to add more courses and resources to LEARN. We want our training system to be as accessible and engaging as possible for all staff and volunteers. We will continue to replace some of our existing content with shorter bite size sessions.

We are looking at how we encourage people to make the most of the LEARN system beyond the courses that they must complete. We are exploring a new feature which will enable our staff and volunteers to recommend training sessions to each other.



## Effectiveness

### Quality Framework

#### What did we say we would do?

In our previous Quality Account we described our plans to design and test a new Quality Framework specifically designed for our charity's support. This framework was intended to describe our organisational processes, approaches and systems for managing and assuring the quality of the support we provide for people affected by stroke. It replaces our previous quality management and assurance approaches.

#### How did we do?

We understand the importance of co-designing our Quality Framework with our staff it is to ensure that it is accessible, engaging and meaningful to embed a culture of continuous quality improvement. We have therefore run a co-design project with teams across the organisation to create a framework that's fit for purpose.

The project group has:

- ✓ Defined the culture that we want to create around quality and the behaviours we want to see.
- ✓ Agreed a set of 25 Quality Statements, across eight themes which describe the key features of our quality approach.
- ✓ Designed an implementation approach for frontline teams, with a key focus on reflective learning and taking action to make improvements.
- ✓ Developed key resources to support implementation.



We originally underestimated the time it would take to meaningfully work together with teams from across the organisation. Investing time in this process has enabled us to create a framework we're confident can drive meaningful improvements, and giving us confidence, in the quality of the support we provide for people affected by stroke.

#### Plans for further work

In May 2023 we will be testing out the new framework in three localities. This will enable us to work with our teams to continue to develop the framework and our understanding of how it works best in practice, before we roll it out across the UK at the start of 2024.



## Accessibility

### What did we say we would do?

In 2021, our charity made a commitment to embed and integrate aphasia and accessibility across all our work. Accessibility for our charity means 'making information, activities, and the environment sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible'.

Making our charity accessible helps to ensure that we're able to add value to the lives of as many people affected by stroke as possible. It also helps us to provide a great experience of our charity for stroke survivors, family members, supporters, staff and volunteers.

This work is led by our dedicated Accessibility Lead and Accessibility Assistant but everyone at the Stroke Association is responsible for accessibility – it is part of everyone's job.

### How did we do?

Here is a summary of some of our work over the last year:

- ✓ We've created illustrations to make more accessible resources in the future.
- ✓ We've created two new Communication Picture Books. One for hospital and one for use in the community to help people communicate well and make their own decisions.
- ✓ We are making two new films about aphasia.
- ✓ We ran a webinar to support staff using our interpreting services. This means we can better support people who speak languages other than English.
- ✓ We continue to fund valuable research about aphasia. In 2022 we funded 3 new projects on aphasia.
- ✓ We have been working to make it easier for our staff to access Reasonable Adjustments to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability.

The Accessibility Team has spent the last year building relationships. We want to learn from their expertise and share our own learnings. Over the last year we have worked with The Aphasia Alliance, British Aphasiology Society, Department of Works and Pension (DWP) and AbilityNet.

### Plans for further work

We have made great progress but as a charity we are relatively early on in our accessibility journey.

The Accessibility Team has identified five key outcomes to help drive accessibility work over the next year.

- ✓ Support more people across the charity to embed our approach to solving inequity in stroke, including accessibility, within their work.
- ✓ Train our staff to use the new accessibility image library to make our activities more accessible.
- ✓ Continue to work together with people affected by stroke, aphasia and other accessibility needs.
- ✓ Create a Translation Policy to guide our written work.
- ✓ Increasing our staff knowledge and skills by developing 'How to' accessibility guidance to help our staff make their activities more accessible.



## Experience

### What did we say we would do?

In 2022/2023 we set out to put the views of the people we've supported at the centre of our learning and our reporting, across every area of our work.

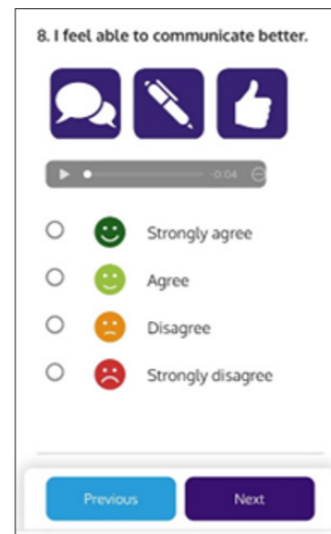
We aimed to improve how we capture, record and demonstrate the difference that our support services make. We wanted to be able to learn from this to enhance the quality of our services.

We planned to pilot our new approaches to capturing self-reported outcomes and experiences in a sample of our services between July and September 2022. We aimed to roll out our new approach across all our services from April 2023 onwards.

### How did we do?

We started by asking stroke survivors and carers we have supported about their priorities for each of the different types of service that we provide. From their words, we created statements about both the difference our support makes in their

lives and their experience of our services. Our new approach became known as Ask and Act.

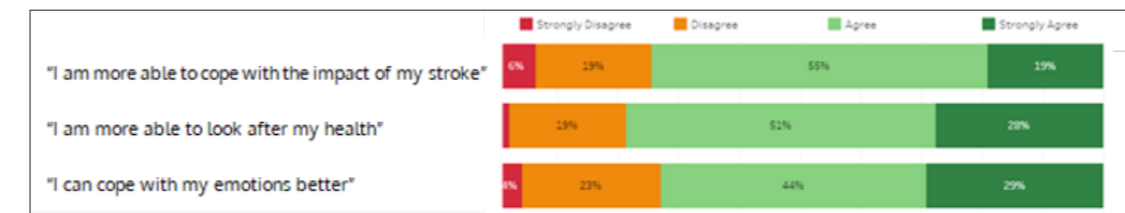


We understand the importance of giving people opportunities to feed back in the way that is best for them. We worked with Aphasia and Accessible Voices (our specialist long-term involvement group with lived experience) to design digital and paper surveys to be as accessible as possible. This included using images, voice recordings and plain English.

"Unless things are put in the way that's aphasia friendly, part of the world is missing for us. [Having accessible surveys] makes the world of difference, just to be able to access the [things] that other people take for granted."

As well as piloting surveys in different formats we introduced Ask and Act calls, asking very open questions. We prioritised calling people who can't respond in other ways, and those who may experience health inequalities.

We continued to improve our approaches based on feedback from the pilot. We now give feedback opportunities to thousands of people every month, across most of our work supporting stroke survivors and carers.



Based on the Ask and Act feedback local service delivery teams reflect on the support that they provide and identify changes to improve the difference and experience of their work.

"The role can be so busy and sometimes you are dealing with difficult issues, but when you see the positive feedback on the responses it makes it all worthwhile. And it will be so useful in team meetings too, to look at any areas that we could improve. I'm definitely an advocate for it!"

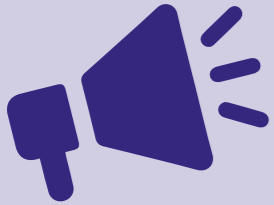
### Plans for further work

Now that we are listening at scale, our focus is on ensuring that front line teams, and other teams across the organisation, regularly reflect on what we're being told, and that this makes a difference to our work.

We also plan to look specifically at the feedback from stroke survivors and carers who may be experiencing health inequalities.

We are continuing to extend Ask and Act across all areas of our work and plan to continue to refine our feedback approaches in our Emotional Support Services.

## Feedback from Stroke Survivors



Throughout the year we receive feedback from stroke survivors and carers about the service that we have provided. We have captured some of these comments below.

"When I came home from hospital, I was in a bad place. I lost my family, I wasn't attending medical appointments, and my Coordinator sorted me out and never gave up on me." (Stroke Survivor)

"The service was invaluable to me emotionally, you were the only service who acknowledged my Mum, and treated her like a person." (Carer)



"I had some help on the phone from the Stroke Association, she made me feel human again."



"I was very low in mood, at times I wanted to kill myself but (my Coordinator) helped me and got me a place at college, she changed my life." (Stroke Survivor)



"Your support has been amazing. I can't tell you the difference that you have made. I wouldn't have got through all of this without you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart." (Carer)

## Statement from Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board

With effect from the 1st of July 2022, commissioning arrangements for health and social care changed to a placed based integrated system, with NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care (NHS GM) now the statutory board with this responsibility locally. NHS GM welcomes the opportunity to comment on the quality account for the Stroke Association.

Looking back at the Stroke Association priorities for 2022/2023 there was a significant focus on service improvement. It was positive to note that there will be a continued drive to develop the New Quality Framework and that the efficacy of this work will be tested over three localities before it is rolled out at the start of 2024. It was reassuring to read how the new framework will detail the support that the Stroke Association provides to clients, describing the processes, approaches and systems for the managing and assuring of quality within the organisation.

Examining the priorities for 2023/2024, the main focus will be service improvement and driving "quality" forward. The plans for these improvements were outlined and subdivided into the specific areas that the Stroke Association wishes to target, being Safety, Effectiveness and Experience, as detailed below.

**Safety:** the report specified how as an organisation, the Stroke Association intends to target and improve safety by clarifying the understanding of consent for the users of the service and the staff. NHS GM was pleased to read a clear commitment and plan to making vast improvements within this area. It was commendable how, as an organisation the Stroke Association intends to be able to effectively communicate with clients in meaningful ways that fully and accurately explain the concept of consent to them. The importance of empowerment and getting this area right for service users, so that those people affected by a stroke can move seamlessly between the Stroke Association's different offers in the future and would be able to receive the right support at the right time was inspirational to read. Also noting the pledge to support and develop staff to have that shared understanding around consent is very admirable. NHS GM celebrates the Stroke Association's success in achieving an aim from last year in relation to safety and the training of staff. In addition, the implementation of the new training system LEARN, an accessible resource available to all staff was a positive read and showcased a commitment to investment as an organisation into developing a safe and knowledgeable workforce.

**Effectiveness** – this was another focus area where there was an expectation of improvement. The report describes how the Stroke Association intends to support those clients with communication difficulties such as Aphasia, and as an organisation it would further seek to make significant service improvements for these service users. It was encouraging to read about the anticipated launch of two new information guides in aphasia friendly formats and how there is a clear plan how to use the newly created and accessible "image library" to achieve this aim. This very much promotes the value of inclusivity for all within the Stroke Association.

**Experience** – the report further relayed how the Stroke Association is committed to involving those people affected by stroke in "all aspects of our work". It was powerful to see the firm differentiation of the meaning of "involvement" and how as an organisation you wanted to ensure this becomes a reality. NHS GM commend and support the narrative within the report specifying how as an organisation there is the intention to work in a manner that "does things with the people they serve, rather than have things done to or for". NHS GM agree that true, meaningful involvement work features acknowledging and including the views and opinions of those people involved either directly or indirectly in the work and including them within all the decisions that are made. The use of innovative new ways of working such as the establishment of the Stroke Views Involvement Network and the long-term involvement groups (Locality Stroke Voices) within each of the ten locality areas provide opportunity to achieve success with this priority. In addition, NHS GM noted that the Stroke Association and NHS England jointly produced the first National Stroke Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs) survey. The focus of the survey being to highlight positive patient experiences and make improvements where they may be needed, as well as informing quality improvement activity at local, regional, and national levels. Well done on the excellent sign-up response of 100% for all the invited trusts in England and ensuring that those surveys are now live. NHS GM would like to congratulate you on the success of this work.

Finally, NHS GM would like to offer its compliments on the success of the Stroke Association's new approach to service improvement; "Ask and Act". The objectives for 2023/24 which specified the roll out of "Ask and Act", alongside the explanation of its purpose; measuring outcomes and experience from those directly affected to be a reassuring and inspirational read.

There was a clear narrative within the report that the “voice” of its clients is truly valued and by listening to those who are at the heart of your work.....the service users, there is a direction of travel to which the Stroke Association can shape and build its services. It was keenly evident how much the implementation of “Ask and Act” reporting not only has benefits for service users, but also the staff. NHS GM agree that “Ask and Act” indeed may act as a vital conduit to help staff reflect upon their work and the support which they provide.

The Stroke Association’s quality account for 2023/2024 showcases the ongoing commitment as an organisation to improving services for those affected by a Stroke and their families/significant others/carers, present realistic, positive aims and insightful plans. NHS GM looks forward to working in partnership with the Stroke Association over the next 12 months to support and improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Greater Manchester.



**Mark Fisher**  
Chief Executive  
Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board



When stroke strikes, part of your brain shuts down. And so does a part of you. Life changes instantly and recovery is tough. But the brain can adapt. Our specialist support, research and campaigning are only possible with the courage and determination of the stroke community. With more donations and support from you, we can rebuild even more lives.

Donate or find out more at [stroke.org.uk](https://stroke.org.uk).

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**We're here for you.**

Stroke Helpline: **0303 3033 100**

From a textphone: **18001 0303 3033 100**

Email: [helpline@stroke.org.uk](mailto:helpline@stroke.org.uk)

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If you would like to talk to us about this report or be provided with a printed version please get in touch:

Email: [productmanagement@stroke.org.uk](mailto:productmanagement@stroke.org.uk)

Address:

**Stroke Association  
Northampton Resource Centre  
1 Sterling Business Park  
Salthouse Road  
Northampton  
NN4 7EX**

Rebuilding lives after stroke

**Stroke**  
Association

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