

Our plans for stroke research 2019 - 2024

This is a plain English version of the Stroke Association's 2019-2024 Research Strategy. To read the full version of the Strategy please visit: stroke.org.uk/our-research-strategy

Stroke
Association



Introduction

Stroke is the fourth biggest killer and one of the leading causes of disability in the UK. There are around 100,000 strokes every year, that's one every five minutes. Stroke can strike anyone at any time - a third of strokes are in people aged 20 to 64.

We're the UK's leading stroke charity. We're here to support people to rebuild their lives after stroke. We believe that everyone deserves to live the best life they can after a stroke - we provide specialist support, fund critical research and campaign to make this a possibility.

Research is a vital part of our work and key to helping us to achieve our goals. We've funded over £55 million of stroke research since the early 1990s, and we currently fund £2.5 million of stroke research every year. Our research has covered all areas related to stroke care and support, from prevention and emergency care to rehabilitation and long-term support. This research has only been made possible by the generosity of our amazing supporters.

We want the research that we fund to make a difference to people's lives. Our Patient and Public Involvement group, Stroke Voices in Research, were involved in developing these plans. They brought their invaluable perspectives and experience to help us shape them, and made sure our plans stayed focused on what matters to people affected by stroke (stroke survivors, carers, families and friends). They will continue to have a vital role in our work going forward.

This document describes our plans for the next five years, how we'll work, and what we want stroke research to look like by 2024.



Our goals 2019–2024

Goal 1. Establish the stroke research experts of the future and encourage people from different research backgrounds to work in stroke research.

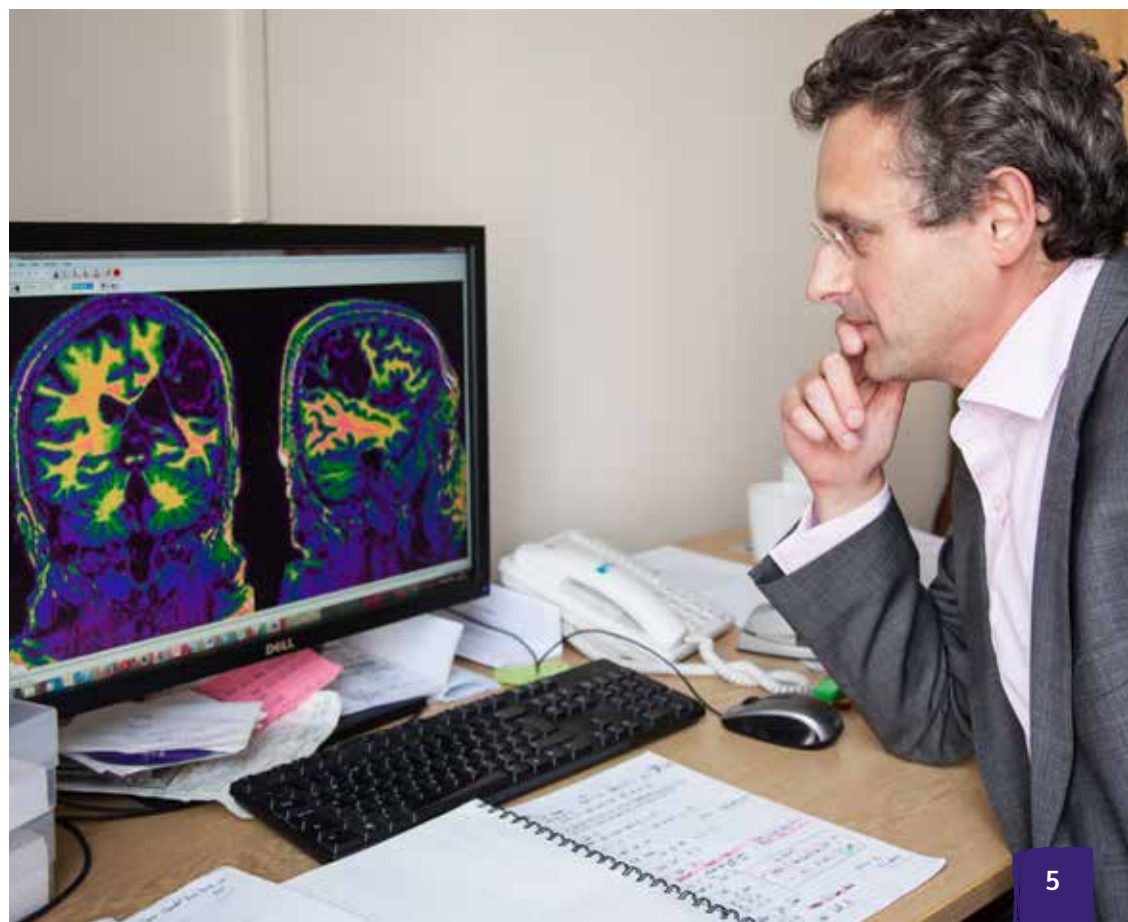
We'll focus on:

Developing the stroke research leaders of the future through our Lectureship and Fellowship funding.

- For research to benefit people affected by stroke, we need a well-trained, talented community of stroke researchers in the UK. We'll support researchers to become future stroke research experts through our Fellowship and Lectureship career development funding programmes.
- Research has shown that patients treated in hospitals that carry out research have better outcomes, and have a better experience while in hospital. We want to support and encourage anyone who interacts with people affected by stroke, from paramedics to pharmacists and physiotherapists, to begin and develop a career in stroke research through our Fellowship funding.
- We'll continue the work we started in our last strategy, funding mid-career researchers through our Lectureship awards and supporting them to become experts and train others in their research fields.
- We'll embrace other methods of providing support for our researchers to help them become stroke research experts of the future, including providing training and networking opportunities.

Encouraging researchers working in areas not traditionally associated with stroke to bring their skills into stroke research.

- We'll encourage people from different research backgrounds to work in stroke research, such as those working in artificial intelligence and digital technology. We'll also encourage stroke researchers to collaborate with those working in fields outside of stroke.
- This will help broaden the range of expertise and experience within stroke research. It will allow researchers to collaborate to develop creative new ideas and make use of advances in technology that can benefit people affected by stroke at all stages of their care.



Goal 2. Increase the amount of investment in, and raise the profile of, stroke research.

We'll focus on:

Working with other organisations to increase funding for stroke research and address issues that are important to people affected by stroke.

- We've developed good relationships with several other charities and research funders over the last few years. We want to carry on working with these organisations and build on our relationships with them over the next five years.
- We know that many stroke survivors live with other health conditions, such as vision loss and diabetes. We want to develop relationships with organisations who fund research into long-term conditions that commonly affect stroke survivors. We'll work in partnership with them to address areas of unmet need for people affected by stroke.

Developing and strengthening our partnerships with researchers and people affected by stroke.

- We'll continue to work with and develop Stroke Voices in Research to give people affected by stroke a louder voice in our work and decisions about the research we fund.
- We want all of the researchers we fund to be ambassadors for our charity. We'll work to strengthen the relationships we have with our researchers and create more opportunities for them to get involved with all aspects of our work.



Leading a formal priority setting exercise in stroke to find the top research priorities at all stages of stroke care.

- Members of Stroke Voices in Research highlighted many areas of stroke care where more research is needed. They agreed that we need research priorities that are relevant to all stages of stroke and life after stroke.
- To address this need, we will lead a formal priority setting exercise, known as a James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnership (JLA PSP).
- A JLA PSP brings together the people affected by a condition and the professionals who treat them. They work together to identify and prioritise the unanswered questions in research that are important to them.
- The results have the potential to change the direction of future research and make sure that it addresses real issues for people affected by stroke and the people who treat them.
- We'll begin to address the new priorities by creating Research Development Groups. These will bring together researchers from a variety of backgrounds with a range of expertise. Together they will develop studies that address the most important priorities.



Goal 3. Fund research that will bring the greatest benefit to people affected by stroke.

We'll focus on:

Funding rehabilitation research to support the 1.2 million stroke survivors living with the impact of stroke in the UK.

- With more people surviving stroke now than 20 years ago, the number of stroke survivors in the UK could reach 2 million by 2035.
- Over the last 25 years, a large proportion of our research funding has gone towards projects with the potential to improve stroke treatment and rehabilitation. But we know there's still a lot of work to be done.
- We'll continue to fund stroke rehabilitation research to develop effective new ways to support the increasing number of stroke survivors and their families to live their best lives after stroke.

Funding research into emergency stroke treatment and care, as well as secondary prevention.

- Effective recognition, diagnosis and treatment at the time of stroke are vital in reducing its devastating effects. Good secondary prevention (treatment, support and education which aims to prevent further strokes) is also important to reduce the risk of another stroke.
- We'll continue to fund research in these areas, to give stroke survivors the greatest chance of living the best life possible after stroke.

Allocating some of our funding to specific areas which have a major impact on people affected by stroke, but where we know there are gaps in our knowledge and a lack of support available.

- While developing this strategy we spoke to research experts, healthcare professionals and people affected by stroke. These conversations identified many areas that have a devastating impact on people affected by stroke and where gaps in care still exist.
- Many of these issues, such as visual impairment, fatigue and cognitive and psychological impact, were also highlighted in the 'Life After Stroke' JLA PSP in 2010/11. Our own JLA PSP will not finish until late 2020. Until we have the results of this we'll continue to address priority areas that have been identified previously with our funding. We anticipate that new areas of focus will emerge over the next five years.

Funding primary prevention research (research that aims to prevent first strokes) in partnership with other research funders only.

- Recent research has shown that the number of strokes per year may increase by nearly 60% over the next 15-20 years. Preventing stroke remains a huge issue for individuals, our healthcare systems and society more widely.
- We know that ways of preventing stroke will also be successful in preventing other conditions, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and vascular dementia. From now on, we'll only fund primary prevention research in partnership with other research funders who are interested in preventing these conditions. Pooling our resources will allow us to have a greater impact than we would be able to achieve on our own.

We'll work in the following ways to make sure we achieve our three goals for stroke research:

1. Keep people affected by stroke at the heart of our work to make sure the research we fund is addressing their needs and priorities.
2. Improve our application processes for research funding to make sure we're getting the highest quality applications and funding research that has the potential to inform day-to-day clinical practice.
3. Support a community of stroke researchers with a range of skills and knowledge, and encourage stroke researchers to collaborate with experts working in other research fields.
4. Change the way we fund research so that we can be flexible to new opportunities, priorities and partnerships.



When stroke strikes, part of your brain shuts down.

And so does a part of you. That's because a stroke happens in the brain, the control centre for who we are and what we can do. It happens every five minutes in the UK and changes lives instantly. Recovery is tough, but with the right specialist support and a ton of courage and determination, 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

Contact us

We're here for you. Contact us for expert information and support by phone, email and online.

Stroke Helpline: **0303 3033 100**

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

Email: helpline@stroke.org.uk

Website: stroke.org.uk

Rebuilding lives after stroke

Stroke
Association