A stroke happens in the brain, the control centre for who we are and what we can do. The impact is as unique as the person affected and could be anything from wiping out speech and physical abilities, to affecting emotions and personality.

The effects of stroke can be devastating and last a lifetime with over 39,000 people in Northern Ireland rebuilding their lives after stroke.¹ With the prevalence of stroke in Northern Ireland projected to increase by over 50% over the next decade action is urgently needed.² We must ensure that stroke services can meet increased demand and provide the best care and support for current and future patients.

The Stroke Association is calling on the next Northern Ireland Assembly to:

1. Urgently progress the commitments made in Reshaping Stroke Care and set out revised targets for achieving these commitments.

2. Invest in and roll-out a new, long-term rehabilitation and support pathway to meet the needs of people affected by stroke.

3. Improve the detection and treatment of major risk factors for stroke by investing in and implementing ambitious stroke prevention plans.

Do you support our calls to make stroke a priority?
Then let us know! Email us at campaigns@stroke.org.uk to pledge your support. Don’t miss your opportunity to improve the lives of people living with stroke.

#makestrokeapriority  Follow us  Facebook  Twitter  Instagram
Progress Reshaping Stroke Care

Following the 2019 Reshaping Stroke Care consultation the Government committed to delivering more stable, sustainable stroke services that would enable better outcomes for patients by 2022. Unfortunately these commitments have not yet been met and no revised targets have been provided by Government.

The establishment of specialist hyper acute and acute stroke units would mean patients can have ready access to the latest in diagnostic testing and treatment, such as thrombolysis or game-changing thrombectomy. The benefits of thrombectomy are substantial: for every 100 people receiving the procedure, 20 will subsequently be able to lead an independent life, and 38 people will be less disabled after a stroke.³

Dedicated stroke units would mean that patients can also access specialist staff and 24/7 care.⁴ Evidence shows patients who are cared for on a specialist stroke unit by a team of doctors, nurses and therapists are more likely to survive and be living independently one year after their stroke.⁵ Progressing Reshaping Stroke Care can decrease long-term disability, reduce hospital stays and ultimately save lives.⁶

The Stroke Association is calling on the next Northern Ireland Assembly to:

Urgently progress the commitments made in Reshaping Stroke Care and set out revised targets for achieving these commitments.
Kim was a busy mum of two working as a driving instructor when she had a stroke in February 2017, while at the breakfast table with her family.

At age 48 Kim had no underlying health problems and her stroke came “totally out of the blue”. She lost all speech and control in her right arm.

Remembering the FAST campaign her husband Basil called the ambulance, which took Kim straight to the Royal Victoria Hospital. She went on to receive thrombolysis, clot busting drugs, and thrombectomy surgery to remove the blood clot in her brain. This procedure allowed her to regain the power in her arm and after a lot of work with the community stroke team, her speech as well.

Speaking about the treatment she received Kim said “My doctor told me, if I had been misdiagnosed, taken to my local hospital, had the stroke after hours or at the weekend I would have had a 16% chance of survival with no speech. I still fight damages caused by the stroke on a daily basis but have made a great recovery to be where I am now”.

The risk of dying or being left with avoidable severe disability is greatly increased for those who do not receive these life changing treatments. We want to ensure, that like Kim, everyone who is eligible for these treatments can readily access them regardless of when or where they have their stroke.

“The treatment I received should be made available 24/7.”

Kim’s story
Invest in stroke rehabilitation services and post-stroke support

We believe that every stroke survivor has the right to make the best possible recovery they can. The quality, intensity and promptness of rehabilitation is linked to improved patient outcomes and reduced long-term costs to health and social care.\(^7\)

97% of stroke survivors in Northern Ireland have at least one cognitive effect from their stroke. 93% have experienced mental health issues and 86% of stroke survivors have mobility problems following their stroke.\(^8\)

59% of stroke survivors in Northern Ireland tell us they did not receive enough support with their recovery after leaving hospital and experienced a big drop in care from hospital to home.\(^9\) Stroke survivors are not getting the support they need which puts their recoveries at risk.\(^10\)

We welcomed the commitment in Reshaping Stoke Care to use our ‘Struggling to Recover’ report as a blueprint to drive improvement in rehabilitation and long-term support. However, to date, progress on implementing this recommendation has been slow.

The Stroke Association is calling on the next Northern Ireland Assembly to:

Invest in and roll-out a new, long-term rehabilitation and support pathway to meet the needs of people affected by stroke.
14% of people in Northern Ireland are registered with high blood pressure which is the single biggest risk factor for stroke. Yet for every ten people diagnosed a further seven don’t know they have it. Furthermore over 40,000 people have been diagnosed with atrial fibrillation (AF), a type of irregular heartbeat, which increases their risk of stroke, with an approximate 10,000 further people undiagnosed.

With investment and robust implementation plans there is the opportunity for much improved diagnosis and management of these conditions. For example it is projected that detection and appropriate management of AF in all eligible patients could avert approximately 4,500 strokes each year across the UK.

Similar to other parts of the UK which have set ambitious targets for stroke prevention over the next ten years the NI Assembly must commit to delivering comparable reductions for those living in Northern Ireland.

The Stroke Association is calling on the next Northern Ireland Assembly to:

Improve the detection and treatment of major risk factors for stroke by investing in and implementing ambitious stroke prevention plans.

Decision-makers cannot overlook the huge potential to save lives, and lessen pressures on the health system in coming years. With the right investment in stroke prevention programmes now we have the opportunity to change the future for those most at risk.

90% of strokes are preventable and are associated with modifiable risk factors, such as high blood pressure.
Stroke continues to be one of the biggest killers in Northern Ireland and a leading cause of adult disability.\(^{15}\)

Nearly 5,000 strokes occur each year with just over 39,000 stroke survivors living in Northern Ireland.\(^ {16}\)

Northern Ireland has the second highest incidence of stroke in the UK and the second highest mortality rate.\(^ {17}\)

Northern Ireland has the third highest stroke mortality levels in international rankings of 26 countries.\(^ {18}\)

The prevalence of stroke in Northern Ireland is projected to increase by over 50% over the next decade, with over 57,000 stroke survivors by 2035.\(^ {19}\)

The cost of stroke in Northern Ireland is projected to increase by 81% over the next ten years, reaching a projected cost of £1.5 billion by 2035.\(^ {20}\)
References

2. Current, future, and avoidable costs of stroke in the UK Summary report.
11. https://nichs.org.uk/information/risk-factors/blood-pressure?
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.

Find out more at stroke.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/ni

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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

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