

Private treatment

This guide explains what treatments are available privately for stroke-related conditions, and some of the things you should consider when seeking private treatment. It also provides a list of organisations that can help you in your search for safe and reliable private treatment.

What is private treatment?

In the UK most of the care you receive from the NHS is free at the point you receive it. Any health treatment you pay for yourself, either directly or through medical insurance, is known as private treatment.

Why would I consider private treatment?

Some people choose to be treated privately because:

- NHS waiting lists can be long and they want to receive treatment quickly
- they want to continue a treatment that is only available through the NHS for a fixed period of time
- the treatment they want is not offered by the NHS
- they want to choose where and when they receive their treatment or they want to be treated by a particular specialist.

What private treatments are available for stroke?

Different types of assessments and treatments for stroke are available privately. They include:

- health screening for stroke risk factors
- TIA (transient ischaemic attack) clinics and brain scans
- rehabilitation including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dieticians, speech and language therapy.

Private health screening

If you don't have any symptoms but are concerned about your risk of a stroke, you can use private screening services. You can have tests and checks for health conditions linked to higher stroke risk, such as high blood pressure, atrial fibrillation and diabetes. If you are told that you have any health conditions, you need to get treatment for them. You can go to your NHS GP, or pursue private treatment.

You may be asked questions about your health and lifestyle, and receive advice about healthy lifestyle choices.

Private treatment

Before you choose a private health screening service, check if the service is regulated. See the *What should I do if I am considering private treatment?* section later in this guide. Remember, if you already have any symptoms, you must go to your GP.

TIA clinics and brain scans

If you have had a TIA (transient ischaemic attack), a TIA clinic can conduct a series of tests to find out what caused it. This is provided by the NHS, but you can choose to attend a private TIA clinic instead. The clinic will offer tests for high blood pressure, high cholesterol and other health conditions such as diabetes or an irregular heartbeat (atrial fibrillation). You can also be tested for carotid artery disease, which is when the two large blood vessels at the front of your neck become narrowed.

Brain scans

A computed tomography (CT) scan or a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan can produce images of your brain to confirm whether or not you have had a stroke and where it took place in the brain. You will usually have one of these scans when you are admitted to hospital with a suspected stroke. However, if your doctor thinks you may have had a stroke some time ago, having one of these scans privately may be able to confirm this for you.

Rehabilitation

If you've had a stroke you may need some rehabilitation. These services should be available to you, at least initially, through the NHS, but you can also pay for additional help privately. Sometimes rehabilitation after stroke is called neuro-rehabilitation.

Some of the rehabilitation therapies that are available privately include:

- physiotherapy for help with mobility, muscle weakness and balance problems
- speech and language therapy for help with communication difficulties or swallowing and eating
- occupational therapy for help with regaining independence in everyday activities
- clinical psychology for help with cognitive problems such as memory loss or poor concentration, or for help with the emotional impact of stroke such as depression, anxiety and personality changes.

Can I have private and NHS treatment at the same time?

Having private treatment should not affect your right to treatment from the NHS. If you are receiving treatment from the NHS and extra private treatment would help you, you can have both.

Your private treatment should be carried out at a different time and in a different place to the treatment you receive from the NHS. Make sure you tell your doctors and therapists about all of the treatments you're receiving, so that they can be aware of any issues and ensure that your care is consistent.

How do I pay for private treatment?

The costs for private treatment can vary greatly depending on where you live and the type of treatment you are looking for.

Usually private treatment is paid for through a medical insurance policy or directly from your own money, which is called self-funding. With some insurance policies you will have to pay for the treatment yourself and then claim the money back, whereas others will pay the hospital or therapist for you.

If you have medical insurance, make sure you read your policy carefully before you start treatment. It's best to contact the insurance company in advance, to get their written agreement that they will pay, and to find out:

- whether they will cover the whole cost of the treatment, or whether there are some costs that you will have to cover yourself
- whether they will accept a referral from your GP or if the company has its own consultant that you may have to speak to.

What should I do if I am considering private treatment?

The first thing you need to do is speak to your GP. He or she will be able to tell you about all the treatments available to you, both privately and through the NHS.

Although doctors cannot advertise private services to their patients, your GP will be able to advise whether a particular treatment is suitable for you. And even though it is possible to have private treatment without consulting your GP, it's a good idea to ask them to refer you, as they know your medical history. You will not be charged for a referral.

Before choosing a provider, you need to do some research. If you can, contact a few private therapists or hospitals near to you to compare the services they offer and how much they cost. This will help you to make an informed decision.

Citizen's Advice offers advice about what you should consider when buying private healthcare. Visit their website at **www.adviceguide.org.uk**.

If you do decide to have treatment privately you need to make sure that the therapist or specialist you use is registered with the professional body that regulates their area of work – these are all listed later in this guide. We also recommend that any rehabilitation therapist you use has experience in working with people affected by stroke.

Where to get help and information

From the Stroke Association

Talk to us

Our Stroke Helpline is for anyone affected by a stroke, including family, friends and carers. The Helpline can give you information and support on any aspect of stroke.

Call us on **0303 3033 100**, from a textphone **18001 0303 3033 100** or email **info@stroke.org.uk**.

Read our publications

We publish detailed information about a wide range of stroke topics including reducing your risk of a stroke and rehabilitation. Read online at **stroke.org.uk** or call the Helpline to ask for printed copies.

My Stroke Guide

My Stroke Guide is the online stroke support tool from the Stroke Association. Log on to find easy-to-read information, advice and videos about stroke. And our chat forums can connect you to our online community, to hear how others manage their recovery. Log on at **mystrokeguide.com**.

Our dedicated Enquiry Line is on hand to support you with using My Stroke Guide. Call **0300 222 5707** or email **mystrokeguide@stroke.org.uk**.

Other sources of help and information

Finding a private hospital

BMI Healthcare

Website: www.bmihealthcare.co.uk

Tel: 0808 101 0337

Runs 69 private hospitals across England, Scotland and Wales offering treatments including physiotherapy and speech and language therapy.

BUPA

Website: www.bupa.co.uk

Tel: 0808 271 4149

One of the UK's leading providers of private healthcare services and insurance.

Health and Social Care Northern Ireland Gateway

Website: www.hscni.net

Provides information on private hospitals and treatment in Northern Ireland.

NHS Choices (England and Wales)

Website: www.nhs.uk

Includes a search function to find NHS and private health services in your local area.

NHS Inform (Scotland)

Website: www.nhsinform.scot

Tel: 0800 22 44 88

Provides information on NHS and private health services in Scotland.

Nuffield Health

Website: www.nuffieldhealth.com

Tel: 0370 218 6369

An independent hospital group that provides a range of services in England and Scotland. Their sites in England offer rehabilitation after stroke.

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Priory Group

Website: www.priorygroup.com

Tel: 0800 280 8210

Provides neuro-rehabilitation services at three residential centres located in Bury and East Sussex.

Private Healthcare UK

Website: www.privatehealth.co.uk

This online resource provides a database of private hospitals, private services in NHS hospitals, as well as private consultants and doctors.

Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability

Website: www.rhn.org.uk

Tel: 020 8780 4500

Email: info@rhn.org.uk

A private hospital in Putney, London, offering long-term care and rehabilitation treatment.

Specialist Info

Website: www.specialistinfo.com

Tel: 01423 562 003

Email: info@specialistinfo.com

An online database of NHS and private hospitals, consultants and GPs. You will need to complete an online registration to access some parts of the website.

Spire Healthcare

Website: www.spirehealthcare.com

Tel: 0808 278 9003

A network of independent hospitals in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Stroke Unit at the Hospital of St John & St Elizabeth

Website: www.thestrokeunit.org.uk

Tel: 020 7806 4075

Email: stroke@hje.org.uk

A private hospital in St John's Wood, London, providing patient care and rehabilitation after the initial emergency treatment for stroke.

Finding a rehabilitation service

Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

Website: www.hpc-uk.org

Tel: 0300 500 6184

An independent UK-wide regulator, which keeps a register of health and care professionals who meet their standards. Use their website to find out if a professional is registered with them, as it is illegal to practise in the UK if you are not. This includes occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists, but not nurses or doctors.

Finding a physiotherapist

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)

Website: www.csp.org.uk

Tel: 020 7306 6666

The professional and educational body for the UK's chartered physiotherapists, physiotherapy students and assistants.

Physio First

Website: www.physiofirst.org.uk

Tel: 01604 684 960

Email: minerva@physiofirst.org.uk

This is a CSP group for members in private practice. You can use the website to search for a private physiotherapist near you.

Finding a speech and language therapist

Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practice (ASLTIP)

Website: www.helpwithtalking.com

Tel: 01494 488 306

Email: office@helpwithtalking.com

This website provides a search function to find private speech and language therapists across the UK, including those who specialise in working with stroke patients (listed under 'acquired brain injury') and those able to work in languages other than English.

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

Website: www.rcslt.org

Tel: 020 7378 1200

Email: info@rcslt.org

Represents speech and language therapists and support workers and promotes good practice.

Finding an occupational therapist

British Association of Occupational Therapists and College of Occupational Therapists

Website: www.cot.co.uk

Tel: 020 7357 6480

Email: reception@rcot.co.uk

The professional body for all occupational therapy staff in the UK.

The College of Occupational Therapists Specialist Section – Independent Practice

Website: www.cotss-ip.org.uk

Tel: 020 7450 2330

Email: enquiries@cotss-ip.org.uk

Provides an online directory of qualified, private occupational therapists.

Finding a psychologist or counsellor

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Website: www.bacp.co.uk

Tel: 01455 883 300

Email: bacp@bacp.co.uk

A professional body that registers accredited counsellors and psychotherapists and can provide advice and information for anybody seeking counselling or therapy. You can use their website to find qualified practitioners in your area.

British Psychological Society (BPS)

Website: www.bps.org.uk

Tel: 0116 254 9568

Email: enquiries@bps.org.uk

The representative body for psychologists in the UK. The website has a directory, which you can use to search for private psychologists who are qualified to carry out after-stroke assessments.

Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland (COSCA)

Website: www.cosca.org.uk

Tel: 01786 475 140

Email: info@cosca.org.uk

Scotland's professional body for counselling and psychotherapy. You can use the online directory to find a qualified private therapist in most parts of Scotland.

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Finding a residential rehabilitation service

Barchester Healthcare Ltd

Website: www.barchester.com

Runs a number of care homes throughout the UK providing 24-hour care and a range of services including neuro-rehabilitation and respite care.

Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust (BIRT)

Website: www.thedtgroup.org/brain-injury

Tel: 01924 266 344

Email: director@birt.co.uk

Runs residential rehabilitation centres and supported housing across England and one in Scotland. They work with people aged 18 to 65 who have brain injuries including those caused by stroke. They also have a neuro-rehabilitation centre located at Goole and District NHS Hospital in Yorkshire.

Hunters Moor Neuro-rehabilitation Centre for the West Midlands

Website:

www.christchurchgroup.co.uk/locations/hunters-moor

Tel: 0121 777 9343

Email: referrals@christchurchgroup.co.uk

Provides behavioural and rehabilitation support in Birmingham and North East England.

Leonard Cheshire Disability Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Services

Website: www.lcdisability.org

Tel: 020 3242 0200

Email: info@lcdisability.org

Supports people with acquired brain injuries who are ready to leave hospital but still need specialist rehabilitation. They offer rehabilitation services in England, Scotland and Wales and living support in Northern Ireland, as well as UK wide short breaks, home care and leisure services.

Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People

Website: qef.org.uk

Tel: 01372 841 100

Email: neurorehab@qef.org.uk

Offers neuro-rehabilitation services for adults aged 16 to 65.

Strode Park Foundation

Website: www.strodepark.org.uk

Tel: 01227 373 292

Email: info@strodepark.org.uk

Provides short- and long-term neuro-rehabilitation for people with neurological disabilities.

Finding a non-residential rehabilitation service

Association for the Rehabilitation of Communication and Oral Skills (ARCOS)

Website: www.arcos.org.uk

Tel: 01684 576 795

Email: admin@arcos.org.uk

Offers professional therapy to people with communication and swallowing problems, including those caused by stroke. Also offers outreach services.

Action for Rehabilitation from Neurological Injury (ARNI Institute)

Website: www.arni.uk.com

Tel: 0203 053 0111

Email: support@arni.uk.com

Trains and certifies specialist instructors to deliver tailored exercise programmes for stroke survivors throughout the UK.

The Bobath Centre for Adults with Neurological Disability

Website: www.bobath.co.uk

Tel: 020 8444 3355

Email: enquiries@bobath.co.uk

Provides specialist therapy for adults with acquired neurological conditions, including stroke. Accepts referrals from consultants and GPs.

National Institute of Conductive Education

Website: www.conductive-education.org.uk

Tel: 0121 422 5564

Email:

foundation@conductive-education.org.uk

Conductive education is a group-based rehabilitation program developed for people who have problems with movement because of a neurological condition such as stroke. Initial sessions are free, and after that there may be a charge. Services are available in Birmingham and Coventry.

Sight Science Limited

Website: www.sightscience.com

Tel: 01224 503 094

Provides Neuro-Eye Therapy (NeET), an interactive computer program that can improve visual sensitivity for people with visual loss.

National Clinical FES Centre

Website: www.salisburyfes.com

Tel: 01722 429 065

Email: enquiries@salisburyfes.com

Offers clinical functional electrical stimulation (FES), which is a treatment for drop foot using small electrical signals.

General advice and information

Association of British Insurers (ABI)

Website: www.abi.org.uk

Tel: 020 7600 3333

Represents the UK's insurance industry. Provides independent information for consumers on all aspects of insurance including health insurance.

British Brain & Spine Foundation

Website: www.brainandspine.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 808 1000

Email: helpline@brainandspine.org.uk

Offers general information on brain and spine conditions and a helpline staffed by neurology nurses. You can find your nearest neurological centre using the map on their website.

Citizens Advice

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Helpline: 03454 04 05 06

Offers independent advice on buying private healthcare and health insurance.

Headway

Website: www.headway.org.uk

Tel: 0808 800 2244

Email: helpline@headway.org.uk

Supports people with brain injuries. They run local groups and a helpline and offer a range of useful publications. They also have a directory of brain injury resources in the NHS and private residential sector.

UK Acquired Brain Injury Forum (UKABIF)

Website: www.ukabif.org.uk

Tel: 0845 608 0788

Email: info@ukabif.org.uk

A coalition of organisations and individuals that aims to provide information and advice to policy makers, service providers and the public. It has local forums and an online directory of private rehabilitation services.

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Healthcare regulatory bodies in the UK

The following are the regulatory bodies you will need to contact if you have any concerns or complaints about private treatment.

England: Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Website: www.cqc.org.uk

Email: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

Tel: 03000 616161

Scotland: Healthcare Improvement Scotland

Website:

www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org

Email: hcis.complaints@nhs.net

Complaints: 0131 623 4300

Wales: Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

Website: www.hiw.org.uk

Email: hiw@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 062 8163

Northern Ireland: Independent Healthcare Sector Complaints Adjudication Service (ISCAS)

Website: www.iscas.org.uk

Email: info@iscas.org.uk

Tel: 020 7536 6091

About our information

We want to provide the best information for people affected by stroke. That's why we ask stroke survivors and their families, as well as medical experts, to help us put our publications together.

How did we do?

To tell us what you think of this guide, or to request a list of the sources we used to create it, email us at feedback@stroke.org.uk.

Accessible formats

Visit our website if you need this information in audio, large print or braille.

Always get individual advice

Please be aware that this information is not intended as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. We strive to ensure that the content we provide is accurate and up-to-date, but information can change over time. So far as is permitted by law, the Stroke Association does not accept any liability in relation to the use of the information in this publication, or any third-party information or websites included or referred to.

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We rely on your support to fund life-saving research and vital services for people affected by stroke. Join the fight against stroke now at stroke.org.uk/fundraising.
Together we can conquer stroke.

The Stroke Association is registered as a charity in England and Wales (No 211015) and in Scotland (SC037789). Also registered in Northern Ireland (XT33805), Isle of Man (No 945) and Jersey (NPO 369).