

## Regional Stroke Service Development

Dear Colleagues,

Developing stroke services in a regional (or any) area can be daunting but also very rewarding! There is no recipe to follow or exhaustive list that will suit every service, but there are some actions you can take that will help you determine and implement what you need locally. The information below can be used as a guide to discover what will work for your health service.

I understand that there are elements of stroke care that will feel too far out of reach at this stage and that's okay. Health Services, especially those in regional areas, will be at different stages of stroke service development. For example, some will have successfully implemented a Code Stroke response but may be challenged by developing stroke unit care, others may feel like they are only at the development stage of both but are really proud of the stroke rehabilitation that they provide in the community. We all need to start somewhere and need to continually drive stroke service improvement across the entire stroke journey. I hope you find this document helpful.

### Identify your champions

Arrange a meeting to start the stroke service development process in your health service. Your champions should include a member from each discipline Medical, Nursing, Speech Pathology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Social Work, Dietitian AND Nurse Unit Managers, Executive, Education Department, Health Information, Quality Unit. There may be other key stakeholders specific to your health service who will influence change and drive development. Meet with your team regularly.

You may be a health service that does not have access to all disciplines. Investigate telehealth options, allied health professional skill sharing models, extended scope of practice and/or transdisciplinary models that may be suitable for your health service. Ensure that appropriate governance is in place, including credentialing.

### Create a Stroke Service Steering Committee (no matter how big or small your health service).

This group of identified key stakeholders will:

- Support implementation and adherence to best practice guidelines
- Monitor the quality, safety and effectiveness of stroke care at your health service
- Guide service development and quality improvement priorities
- Provide expertise and guidance to the stroke team at your health service
- Identify opportunities to bring back to the committee

### Know your service and how it is performing

- Collect and analyse data (e.g. AuSCR, RISE, Stroke Foundation Acute & Rehab Audits)
- Review the services that you have and your performance against:
  1. Acute Stroke Clinical Care Standards - [Acute Stroke Clinical Care Standard | Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care](#).

- i. Complete a gap analysis for this. Your Executive, Leadership & Quality teams will need this for the accreditation assessment. Ask how your health service performed during the last assessment cycle
  2. Stroke Unit Certification - [ASC Stroke Unit Certification Project – Australian Stroke Coalition](#)
    - i. Reach out to the Australian Stroke Coalition and request the documentation required for submission
    - ii. Utilise the framework to identify gaps in your service. Meet as a key stakeholder group and develop an action plan. Prioritise the component/s you will focus on first
  3. Stroke Foundation Audits (Acute and Rehabilitation) - [Stroke data | InformMe - Stroke Foundation](#)
    - i. Gather your stroke team to complete these as a group. You will learn a lot from closely reviewing your medical records with your colleagues. You will identify patterns and will be able to discuss your performance as you analyse together. These discussions will provide opportunity for innovation.
- Meet with Executive, Management, Emergency Department Leadership, Allied Health etc to discuss performance.
    - Ask for their thoughts on barriers and enablers to improve performance
    - Ask what they need from you to increase resources (e.g. what they specifically need in a business case to fund a dedicated Stroke Coordinator position)
    - Ask if they know of any opportunities to improve stroke service resourcing that may be coming up and if they need any information from you

### Advocate for a dedicated Stroke Coordinator

Advocate for this position to be adequately funded. The Stroke Coordinator will:

- Lead and drive change
- Coordinate the team work that will be required to develop the key areas for improvement
- Collect and analyse data and consistently review performance
- Share the data and discuss performance at every opportunity
- Bring people to the table, grow the stroke team (clinical and non-clinical)
- Provide education and training
- Implement evidence-based practice
- Reach out to the State or Territory Stroke Network and understand what opportunities and support are available in their state and understand what is happening at a National Level.

### Collaboration/partnership

- Low stroke admission numbers may limit access to stroke expertise on the ground therefore, reach out to local health services and see if there is an opportunity for collaboration
- Is there an opportunity to utilise a telehealth model to access the service that you need? (e.g. BUILDS [Stroke Unit | Builds \(strokeunitforall.org\)](#), Teleneuropsychology, Tele Neurorehabilitation)

### Research opportunities

- Seek opportunities to be involved in research. This provides an opportunity to share your views and experience from a regional perspective, to be involved trialing new treatments or therapeutic approaches, to be at the forefront of emerging evidence, and to build the capacity within your team.

### Learn together

- Gather your champions and work through the wonderful stroke education resources available online.
  1. [Learning and resources | InformMe - Stroke Foundation](#)
  2. [Angels Initiative - Global Stroke Hospitals & E-learning Centre \(angels-initiative.com\)](#)
  3. [Acute Stroke Nurses Education Network - ASNEN](#)
  4. [Australian Stroke Coalition – Bringing together representatives from groups and organisations working in the stroke field to strengthen the voice for stroke care.](#)
  5. [The StrokeEd Collaboration conducts stroke rehabilitation workshops for physiotherapists and occupational therapists](#)

### Celebrate together

- Highlight improved performance no matter how big or small
- Create a Stroke Newsletter template to:
  - report on your Quality Improvement progress
  - KPI performance
  - Inform your team what education opportunities are coming up e.g. webinars, conferences workshops

### Raise awareness

- Meet with your Communication Team (or for small health services find out who is responsible for your hospital communication platform, social media etc.) and provide dates and resources for key stroke events e.g. National Stroke Week, World Stroke Day, Australia's Biggest Blood Pressure Check, National Carer's Week
- Share good news stories, media releases, endorsed social media posts on your internal health service and social media platforms
- Celebrate your stroke service achievements on this platform

### Reach out

- Seek support and advice from your stroke network
- Reach out to experts in the field and high performing sites and ask for their guidance
- Find a mentor who will support you through this challenging, but very rewarding, journey

Good luck. You've got this!



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