

People at the Centre Update 12

Recoveries of stroke survivors badly affected by COVID-19

The Stroke Association released a survey of almost 2,000 stroke survivors and their carers. It found that the pandemic has affected every aspect of stroke treatment and care.

The key findings were compiled in a report, "Stroke recoveries at risk: how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected stroke survivors' lives and recoveries", and look at consequences for stroke survivors all over the UK.

In Scotland, the Stroke Association heard from 139 stroke survivors and 30 carers and family members of stroke survivors. Some of the main findings are summarised in the graphs below:



6 in 10 (59%) stroke survivors in Scotland say they have received less support from health and care services than usual



70% have worried more about their health, and **72%** have worried more about what the future holds.



Almost half (48%) of stroke survivors have had appointments relating to their stroke online or over the phone



Over two thirds (68%) of stroke survivors report feeling more anxious or depressed during the pandemic

Additionally, the latest Scottish Stroke Care Audit report showed that more than a third of all stroke patients still did not receive timely, basic care. Regarding shielding, only 13% of stroke survivors in Scotland reported that they had been advised by the government that they were in the shielding category (compared to 20% across the rest of the UK), while others chose to follow shielding guidance nevertheless.

The report also shows that carers report feeling additional pressures:

- under half of all carers said they felt overwhelmed and unable to cope
- over two thirds of carers were providing more care and support during lockdown
- 68% said they found it more difficult to carry out practical tasks, such as buying food, picking up prescriptions or carrying out caring duties.
- however, just over half (52%) of carers said that they had been given enough information, guidance and support during the pandemic

“Any support, while usually now fairly infrequent, has completely melted away”

“My wellbeing has suffered and my recovery has also suffered”

"I'm waiting for an operation for [drop foot] but it was cancelled due to COVID-19"

The main recommendations for Scotland add to the overall UK recommendations, which include commitment to national stroke initiatives, reinforced follow-up with recent stroke survivors and ensuring stroke rehabilitation meets national clinical guideline levels:

- the Scottish Government needs to continue to make urgent progress on its Programme for Government stroke commitments:
 - Define [and implement] a progressive stroke service, covering the full pathway, including rehabilitation and long-term support.
 - Improve stroke care bundle performance in hospitals.
 - Increase awareness of the signs of stroke, and stroke prevention.
 - Make thrombectomy available for everyone who needs it by 2023.
- the Scottish Government should establish a regular reporting mechanism for the Programme for Government stroke commitments to Parliament, to track progress on commitments, ensuring transparency and accountability

[Read the full report and recommendations.](#)

