

The Scottish Parliamentary Election 2021 – Stroke Association publishes manifesto

It is important to prioritise work to help improve recovery from stroke says The Stroke Association in Scotland.

They have set this out in their manifesto which they are drawing to the attention of all would-be MSPs and also the people who will vote for them.



Colin Oliver, Public Affairs Officer for the Stroke Association in Scotland said: "Covid-19 has been tough for all

of us. Thanks to the amazing commitment of some truly dedicated people working in the NHS and in social care, lives have been saved and people have been cared for. Stroke teams up and down the country, have in many areas managed to continue to offer specialist care and treatment to patients throughout the pandemic. We cannot thank them enough. We really do owe them a huge amount.

“But we are concerned. The fallout from Covid-19 is going to pose challenges for everyone in health and social care. Our Recoveries at Risk report last autumn highlighted the real life impact of the pandemic on people recovering from a stroke. Emerging evidence of links between Covid-19 and stroke means that now, more than ever, a renewed national focus on stroke is needed in Scotland.

“Health officials have been working during the pandemic to review evidence and define what ‘a progressive stroke service for Scotland’ should look like. This will include improved stroke care bundle figures, improved stroke prevention measures, a national thrombectomy service and stroke-specific, person-centred rehabilitation. The charity is pleased that people affected by stroke will be included in the development of this work.”

A draft paper will be with the Scottish Government in the next few weeks. Whatever the outcome of May’s election the Stroke Association in Scotland expects the next government to push this work on, and for a new, improved, progressive stroke service to be implemented.

Around 10,000 people have a stroke every year in Scotland. Stroke and cerebrovascular diseases kill over 3,800 people annually. Many more have to live with the effects. There are now over 128 000 stroke survivors living in Scotland. It’s estimated there will be almost 175 000 by 2035.

Stroke is a brain attack and happens when the blood supply to

part of your brain is cut off and brain cells are damaged or die. The impact varies from person to person depending on which part of the brain is affected. It could be anything from wiping out speech and physical abilities, to affecting emotions and personality.

Brenna Collie from Strichen near Fraserburgh, had a stroke four years ago when she was just 14. Brenna was in her bedroom texting a friend when the phone slipped from her hand and she realised she couldn't pick it up again.

"It happened very quickly. I lost all movement down the left side of my body. I couldn't walk. My speech was all slurred and I couldn't call for help. I have never felt so scared."

She knows only too well that her life would be very different without the stroke specialist treatment and support she received.

Brenna received good care throughout her stroke journey. She underwent thorough investigations and received speedy access to treatment. She had intensive rehabilitation which helped her to walk again and begin to return to an independent life.

"I had to learn how to do things I took for granted like getting dressed and brushing my teeth. I have received amazing support from health professionals, my teachers at school, family and friends. But I'd be lying if I didn't say how tough it's been. After coming home from hospital, I started to have problems with anxiety and my self-esteem. At school, I was 'the girl who'd had a stroke', and many of my classmates didn't understand what had happened, which made school challenging. That was hard and I felt very alone. But I've pulled through and my family have been my rock."

After returning to school Brenna slowly picked up her hobbies again including cycling, archery and photography. In 2019, she won the prestigious Scottish Portrait Award Young Photographer Award for a self-portrait of how she felt the night she had

her stroke.

During lockdown, Brenna took to cycling and has cycled 22 miles to Fraserburgh and back –a big moment for her. Her granny has also taught her how to knit over the lockdown period, which helps strengthen Brenna's weak arm.

Brenna is now studying Primary Education at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh.

The Stroke Association in Scotland, is urging people to read its election manifesto launched today and to support its call for the implementation of a new progressive stroke service.

Colin said: "The implementation of a new, improved stroke service across the entire pathway from prevention to hospital treatment, rehabilitation and support, in tandem with forthcoming changes nationally to delivery of social care presents an opportunity for the next government to make a profound difference to the lives of thousands of Scots families."

You can read the manifesto here:
www.stroke.org.uk/scottish-parliament-election