Hello, and welcome, wherever you are joining me from. My name is James White, and I am the Head of Advocacy and Campaigns at the Stroke Association. In this session we are looking at our newly released ‘Stroke recoveries at risk’ report.

The report brought together valuable patient insights, as well as the views of clinicians, researchers and our own staff working with those affected by stroke. It details how the pandemic has affected stroke survivors, their families and carers and includes key recommendations for all UK governments, as well as local systems.

If you haven’t already, the report is available to read online.

Who did we hear from?

We heard from 2,000 people affected by stroke! That breaks down to roughly 80% who are stroke survivors, and 20% who are carers. And the responses were proportionate across the UK.
Below, you can see the breakdown of when they had their stroke. It included 5.5% during the pandemic itself.

Now, let’s look at the key findings.

We heard that almost all aspects of stroke care and treatment have been impacted by the pandemic – including life after stroke, rehabilitation, mental health and well being, as well as calling 999 in the first place.
A look at the key findings shows that the pandemic has meant 4 in 10 people who have had a stroke this year feel they aren't receiving the help and support needed to rebuild their life after stroke.

In addition, people are worrying more about what the future holds. 7 in 10 stroke survivors report feeling more anxious recently.

And it isn't just stroke survivors themselves. Over half of people who are caring for stroke survivors say they feel overwhelmed.

We also heard that 29% of people who had their stroke during the pandemic delayed seeking emergency medical attention because of it.

One area that came through really strongly in the survey responses was the impact of the pandemic on stroke survivors and carers mental health and wellbeing.

We heard for example, that:

- Over two thirds of stroke survivors have felt more anxious and depressed lately.

- 68% of stroke survivors told us they now feel more worried about their health, while 69% worry about what the future holds for them and their loved ones.

- 45% of all stroke survivors now feel less able to cope with the impacts of their stroke, and over a third report feeling abandoned.
And, the situation is worse for the survivors who had their stroke during the pandemic.

- 82% say they feel more anxious and depressed, while
- 88% have worried more about their health.

The report includes rich insights from those affected by stroke – including quotes from stroke survivors, their families and carers – as well as several case studies that reflect on the impact the pandemic has had on different areas of the pathway.

Please now let’s watch Peter’s story about how the pandemic has affected his recovery. Let’s listen to Peter’s story.
Peter, Stroke Survivor:

Hello, my name is Peter and in March 2018 I had a massive stroke. It nearly killed me, but I’m glad to say I am here to tell the tale. Unfortunately the stroke meant that I had lost the use of my left arm and hand and also I am having to learn to walk again.

It’s been quite devastating and I am not looking forward to the long-term prospects of rehabilitation.

I need physiotherapy for that and had a great physiotherapist but unfortunately she had to return to the front line because of the pandemic. I also go to a gym for the disabled and get further physiotherapy there and personal training. This had to close for a few weeks, again because of the pandemic.

The consequence of my stroke have left me feeling very depressed at times. I was looking forward to my long-term project following my early retirement and I used to really enjoy cycling, gardening, and playing the piano, which I can no longer do for obvious reasons. So my mental health has really taken a plummet.

Fortunately, I’ve got the support of my fantastic partner, family friends, and local people. If I’d not had that, and I needed to access mental health services, these are really constrained at the moment, because of the pandemic, so that would have been quite difficult I feel.

The Stroke Association have actually done a study recently, and from that they’ve got a number of recommendations which they want to propose to the government through an open letter. We’d really like you to sign that letter please. And hopefully that will help me and other people like me to regain and rebuild our lives. Thank you very much.
James White:

So, what are we calling for?

We’re calling for all UK governments to commit to the following recommendations, including:

- urgently progressing, or committing to, national stroke initiatives and delivering on commitments made prior to the pandemic.

- Stroke teams should follow up with all stroke survivors who had a stroke this year to review and address their rehab needs.

- Health and care systems and local authorities should prioritise increasing the provision of, and access to, mental health services.

Alongside these, we also have specific recommendations for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

In short, we hope this report will help with our aim of improving stroke prevention, treatment and care, and making sure that stroke is the health priority it needs to be.

So, if you’re sat there wondering how you can help us out and take action. We need your help to make sure the recommendations are heard.

Alongside the report we launched an Open Letter: this calls on governments and local decision makers across the UK to urgently act on our recommendations in the report.
Please sign our Open Letter, and then share the link with your colleagues, friends, families, and members of the stroke community.

And we’d love you to join us for our two Question & Answer sessions, so you can ask us any questions you have about the report.

We’d love to hear from you about your reflections on it, and if you are planning on using the findings in your own work.

Contact us (Campaigns@stroke.org.uk) to find out more, or to arrange to speak to a member of the Stroke Association team.

Thank you for sticking with me to the end, and an additional thanks to my colleagues Jess and Steph for their help getting this ready, as well as the excellent UCL team. Thank you.

Stroke Association

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