

## Stroke care services



### Why do hospital stroke services in South Tyneside and Sunderland need to change?

Despite the best efforts of the staff working within local stroke services, we have real difficulties in meeting key clinical standards at both hospital sites. Far too many patients are waiting longer than the recommended one hour to have a CT scan which is an essential test in diagnosing a stroke. Those patients who would benefit from clot-busting drugs (thrombolysis) are waiting too long to get it. Some patients, particularly South Tyneside patients, are waiting longer to be admitted to a specialist stroke ward and to see a senior doctor within 24 hours and they are not receiving enough physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy when they get there.

This is because at South Tyneside District Hospital we do not have enough stroke doctors (consultants), specialist stroke nurses and therapy staff. We find it very difficult to recruit new staff as many do not want to work across two hospital sites or do more night and weekend working. We have already had to temporarily transfer all hospital stroke services from South Tyneside District Hospital to Sunderland Royal Hospital (as of December, 2016) due to a shortage of stroke physicians.

We are struggling to achieve the clinical standards because our two hospitals do not treat enough patients each year (a minimum of 600) to maintain and develop up the expertise and skill needed to offer the safest, most specialised stroke care. We also have to make sure that patients are able to receive the same high quality stroke care regardless of what day or time they have a stroke.

## Factsheet: Stroke care services

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Being unable to meet clinical standards directly impacts on our ability to diagnose and treat patients who experience a stroke as quickly and effectively as possible. Patients are also less likely to regain their previous level of independence after a stroke without more therapy and rehabilitation support. These are risks that we want to avoid.



## What difference will these changes make to the people of South Tyneside and Sunderland?

All local stroke prevention and follow-up care will continue to be local; these changes only apply to the in-hospital (acute) bit of stroke care.

However we know from other areas where similar changes have been made that lives have been saved. People across both South Tyneside and Sunderland will therefore be able to have confidence that they have access to a responsive, high quality stroke service at all times of the day and week. They will have improved chances of survival and better recovery so that they spend less time in hospital and be able to lead a better quality life.

The temporary changes to stroke services are already having a positive impact on stroke patients from across South Tyneside and Sunderland. More patients are having a brain scan sooner, and are being admitted to a stroke ward quicker with far more patients receiving clot-busting drugs within one hour and spending more time being supported on a stroke ward. Find out more about the proposed changes and have your say on the three proposed options at

[www.pathtoexcellence.org.uk](http://www.pathtoexcellence.org.uk)

