Research Strategy
2026–2031

Stroke Association

Finding **strength** through **support**



Leading a revolution in stroke research

Over the past decade, science and medicine have advanced at an extraordinary pace, transforming our understanding of health and disease. Yet, this progress has unfolded against a backdrop of major societal change, including an ageing population and widening health inequalities – both of which intensify the burden of stroke. Over these years, stroke research has made impressive progress with limited support, but the level of investment has not kept pace with its potential. The infrastructure, funding, and expertise dedicated to understanding, preventing, and treating stroke remain disproportionately small compared to its scale and impact. As the UK's largest stroke charity, we have a vital role to play in redressing this imbalance, working alongside our partners. **We can, must, and will do better.**

Every day in the UK, another 240 people experience the life-changing reality of stroke. It is the fourth biggest killer and the leading cause of complex adult disability, yet for many, stroke is preventable, treatable and recoverable.

Stroke suddenly and indiscriminately takes away someone's movement, speech, sight, or their ability to swallow. Beyond its visible effects, stroke brings hidden challenges that can last a lifetime, affecting independence, ability to work and mental health – lives can be shattered in an instant.

As our population ages and health disparities increase, the number of people having a stroke each year is expected to rise by 50%, reaching around 151,000 strokes annually by 2035.

People in the most deprived communities and those from Black and South Asian backgrounds face even higher risk. Stroke acts as a barometer for health inequality, showing more vividly than most other health conditions how deeply inequity shapes health outcomes. Our collective responsibility is to ensure that everyone affected by stroke has the best chance not just to survive, but to thrive.

'I've been staggered by the number of people, of different ages, ethnicities and backgrounds, who have had a stroke. It's indiscriminate. It affects anyone, any age, no matter what their background is.'

Paul, Stroke Voices in Research member





Research is hope.

The prioritisation of funding and capacity to deliver stroke research are sharply out of kilter with this growing need. In fact, it is in decline – in 2018 across the UK, £32.6 million was invested in stroke research and by 2022 this had dropped by 19% to £26.5 million (the most recent analysis of UK biomedical research spend). The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact across many disease areas and conditions, but stroke research funding fared badly and is still struggling to recover. In 2022, it represented only 0.9% of all UK non-commercial medical research funding.

Research is hope. It gives people affected by stroke hope that the future doesn't have to look like the past. Research finds better ways to prevent strokes, treat them quickly, and help people recover independence. It turns today's ideas into tomorrow's therapies, and it saves brains, lives and money across health and social care.

We're building on strong foundations but now need to pick up momentum. For over 30 years, the Stroke Association has been at the heart of discoveries that have changed what it means to survive a stroke. Our funding has helped deliver treatments like thrombolysis and thrombectomy, which save lives and reduce disability, and supported innovations such as the NHS FAST test, and therapy intervention such as swallow assessment. Stroke Association-funded research has shaped national and international clinical guidelines, improving care for millions. These achievements show that when stroke research is properly funded, it changes lives.

We are building on this legacy with a £15 million investment to accelerate the next generation of breakthroughs.

We know that development and delivery of high-quality research is more challenging than ever, and accelerated progress will demand more than funding alone.

That is why this Research Strategy marks an evolution in our role – from being primarily a funder to being a system leader that shapes the national stroke research landscape.

We will champion stroke as a research priority, strengthen collaboration, and help build an ecosystem where innovation and lived experience are at the heart of discovery.

We remain firmly committed to the James Lind Alliance Stroke Priority Setting Partnership, which describes the research questions that matter most to people affected by stroke. These priorities will continue to guide what we fund. Through this strategy, we are also defining how we make those investments count – how we use our voice, evidence, and partnerships to accelerate discovery, build research capacity, and turn breakthroughs into real-world impact faster.

We have listened to people affected by stroke, healthcare professionals and scientists, funders and policymakers. Their insight, alongside a clear-eyed view of the political and healthcare landscape, has shaped a strategy rooted in reality but driven by possibility. It recognises that investing in stroke research, especially research that translates discovery into better prevention, treatment, and recovery, is not a cost but an investment in people, progress, and hope.

The millions of people affected by stroke in the UK and worldwide deserve better. We will work with governments, funders, and industry to restore balance and fairness to the research landscape – so that stroke research gets the attention, ambition, and investment it deserves. Because stroke research isn't just about science – it's about people. It's about building a future where everyone affected by stroke has the chance to live their best lives after stroke.



Professor Deb Lowe
Medical Director,
Stroke Association



Juliet Bouverie OBE
Chief Executive,
Stroke Association

Because stroke research isn't just about science – it's about people. It's about building a future where everyone affected by stroke has the chance to live their best lives after stroke..

Stroke research today in the UK

Globally, stroke is the second leading cause of death after ischaemic heart disease. Currently, an estimated 101 million people live with the effects of stroke, and every year 6.5 million people die from it. The global burden of stroke is accelerating – between 1990 and 2019, the number of strokes increased by 70%.

Stroke research is a global endeavour. The UK plays a leading role within this international ecosystem, with a strong track record of delivering practice-changing clinical trials that inform treatment guidelines worldwide. Few countries can match the UK's collaborative, multidisciplinary stroke research community, which unites healthcare professionals and scientists across the four nations. Combined with world-class universities and research institutions, the UK contributes significantly to advancing stroke science and shaping global clinical practice, helping to drive global improvements in prevention, treatment and recovery.

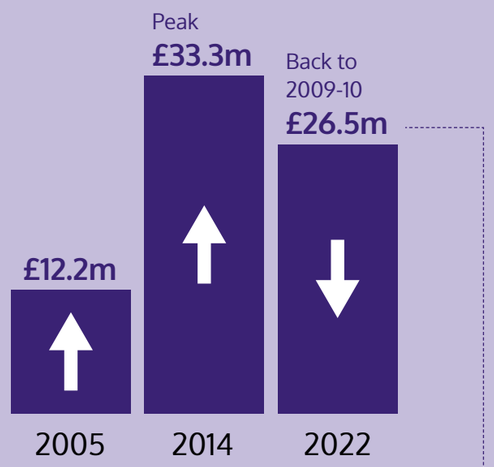
In the UK, however, stroke research is both chronically underfunded and in decline. The Covid-19 pandemic impacted biomedical research funding as a whole in the UK, seeing a fall in funding across multiple disease areas. The cuts to stroke research funding, however, have been much deeper. Cancer funding fell by 10%, neurological disease by 8% and cardiovascular disease by 3% – yet stroke research fell by almost 20%.



'Stroke can ruin lives. It's the most disabling thing that can happen. It costs the country a fortune, not that it's the fault of anyone having a stroke, which is why I can't understand why it doesn't get more funding.'

Jacki, Stroke Voices in Research member

UK Stroke Research Funding (2004–2022)



UK Research Funding by Disease Area (2022)

This funding gap stops progress in all areas of the stroke care pathway – from prevention, diagnosis and new treatments to effective rehabilitation and long-term support for stroke survivors.

This financial shortfall is compounded by the NHS stroke workforce crisis and 'the steep and accelerating decline in the number of clinical academics. There are huge gaps in the stroke clinical community, who are overstretched in delivering clinical care. This brilliant community often does not have the time or support to carry out research, much less help mentor and develop the next generation of stroke researchers. Without clear career pathways within stroke research or mentorship and support, we lose many brilliant young researchers to other disciplines.

Conducting research in the NHS can also be challenging, with regulation that is often burdensome and clinical trial infrastructure struggling to keep pace with growing demand.

The current UK Government has set out plans to champion research by making it more accessible across health and social care and by streamlining processes to better support clinical research practice.

Yet the picture is not without hope. Across the stroke research and clinical community, there is deep expertise, creativity, and determination to do better for people affected by stroke. The task now is to unlock that potential – by connecting efforts, reducing barriers, and creating the conditions for stroke research to thrive and deliver lasting change.



A window of opportunity

Despite the pressures on stroke research and its clinical workforce, this community continues to achieve far more than its size and resources suggest. With the right focus and investment, we can unlock extraordinary opportunities – from advances in neuroscience, data science, and imaging to the transformative power of AI, genomics, and digital health. The breakthroughs that have already changed lives, from clot-busting drugs and thrombectomy to better rehabilitation and recovery, are just the start of what's possible.

With strong leadership and the right targeted research, lives can be saved, disability reduced, and independence of stroke survivors restored and the costs of doing so greatly reduced. This strategy is designed to seize the moment and bridge to a different future where fewer people have strokes, more people survive them, and recovery is faster, fuller, and fairer.

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Shaping the future of stroke research: **Our role and ambition**

At the Stroke Association, our purpose is simple but profound: to tackle the devastation of stroke. Our corporate strategy sets out how we do this by supporting people affected by stroke, influencing decision-makers, and inspiring action from others. Our research strategy is a natural extension of this – showing how these pillars come to life in shaping a bold new future for stroke research.



Support
Help stroke survivors and their loved ones to live their best lives after stroke.

Influence
Catalyse action with decision-makers to drive improvement in stroke.

Contribute
Help and inspire supporters to make their best contribution.

Underpin
Help our people to work safely, legally, ethically, sustainably and continuously.

We **support** people affected by stroke to live their best lives after stroke. So, every research project must be informed by those it serves. The lived experiences of people affected by stroke, healthcare professionals and diverse communities will shape the design, delivery and sharing of all research, making it relevant, equitable and impactful.

We **influence** by catalysing action with decision-makers. Stroke needs to be a national health research priority on a par with other major disease conditions. Through relentless advocacy and by amplifying the voices of people affected by stroke, we will ensure that governments, philanthropists and funders address the chronic underfunding of stroke research and commit to long-term investment.



Over the lifetime of this strategy, we will invest **£15 million** in research that transforms treatment and accelerates recovery. Through this commitment, we aim not just to fund research, but to shape a thriving ecosystem that delivers real change for people affected by stroke.

People **contribute** their time, money, and voice to drive progress in stroke research. Stroke survivors and carers share their lived experience to shape research that truly reflects their priorities and needs. Philanthropists and partners grow the funding and capacity required to expand what stroke research can achieve. By inspiring and enabling these contributions, we direct energy and resources to where they will make the greatest difference, strengthening the research environment and accelerating change for people affected by stroke.

The Stroke Association has been one of the UK's most significant and sustained investors in stroke research, committing over £65 million since the early 1990s to pioneering science and leadership that have transformed stroke care. The impact of our funding is visible across every stage of the stroke pathway.

Revolutionising emergency treatment: We supported the early UK research and translation that underpinned thrombectomy, now recognised as one of the most effective treatments in modern medicine. We also helped drive the evidence that expanded the safe use of thrombolysis, reducing death and disability for thousands of people with stroke.

Transforming recovery and rehabilitation: Our funding for early supported discharge (ESD) has defined how stroke recovery services are designed and commissioned, demonstrating that well-organised, multidisciplinary teams help survivors return home sooner and regain independence.

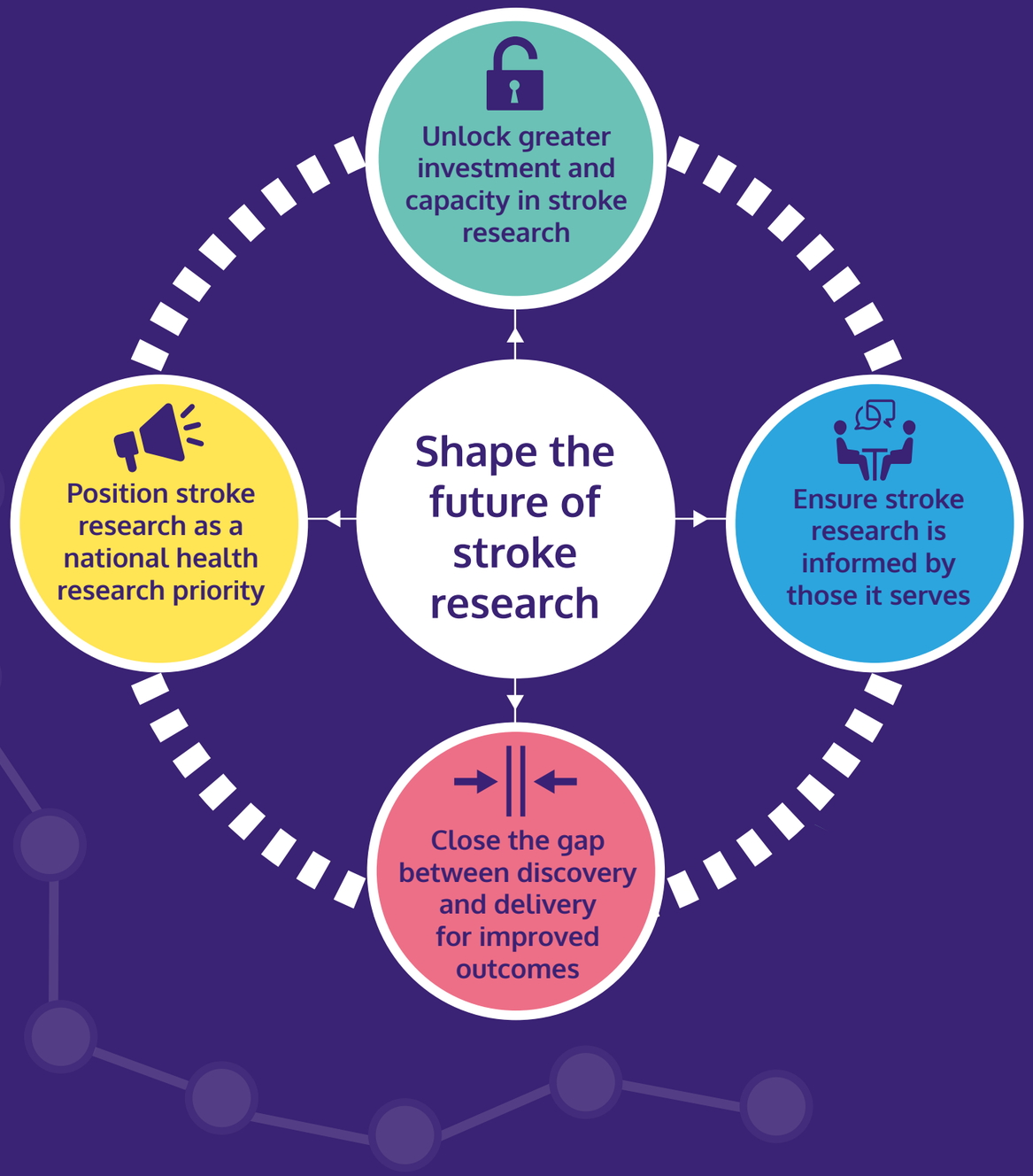
Embedding evidence into practice: Stroke Association-funded research has been cited in national and international clinical guidelines, including the 2023 National Clinical Guideline for Stroke for the UK and Ireland and in guidelines issued by the European Stroke Organisation and the American Heart Association – helping to shape everyday clinical decisions around the world.

Changing public awareness and diagnosis: Studies we supported helped develop the NHS FAST test, now the global standard for recognising the signs of stroke and central to public awareness campaigns such as 'Act FAST'.

This track record demonstrates our credibility, influence, and ability to turn ideas into impact. But there is still more to discover - and a growing gap between what research shows can work and what is routinely delivered in practice. Our challenge now is to close that gap, accelerating progress so that every stroke survivor benefits from the best possible science and care.



Key objectives of our research strategy



Our ambition for stroke research

Our research ambition is to transform the treatment of stroke and, wherever possible, prevent strokes from happening. Working in partnership with the James Lind Alliance (JLA), we have identified the many important unanswered research questions in stroke – spanning prevention, diagnosis, acute treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery. These priorities are rooted in the lived experience of people affected by stroke. Established through the JLA Stroke Priority Setting Partnership, they continue to sit at the heart of our mission.

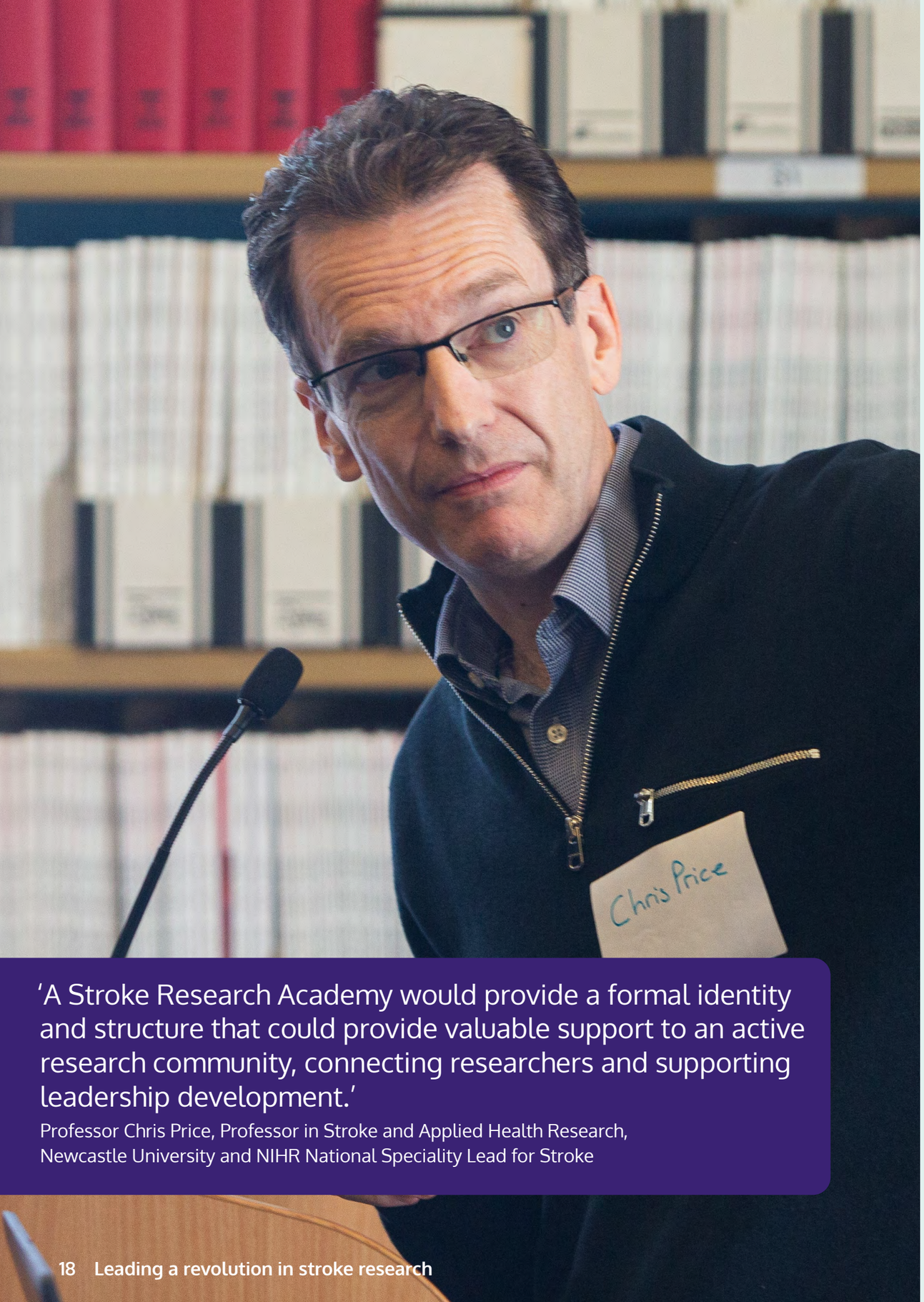
We also support the research priorities on childhood stroke identified through the JLA Childhood Neurological Conditions Priority Setting Partnership. Together, these partnerships provide a clear and evidence-informed foundation to guide researchers and partners towards the areas of greatest potential impact for people affected by stroke.

In developing this strategy, we have consulted widely and thought deeply about how to make the greatest possible impact – shaping a different future for stroke research that transforms the treatment and care of stroke. Through our refreshed objectives, we will act as a catalyst across the research ecosystem: galvanising funders, building capacity, embedding lived experience, and driving policy change.

Together, these four objectives will lay the foundations for a new era of stroke research, one capable of delivering lasting change for people affected by stroke.

'Compared to medical doctors, there is a lack of clear career pathways for allied health professionals to do research alongside their clinical work. This lack of support, and the lack of role models from these professions means that we lose talent.'

Professor Terry Quinn, Professor in Cardiovascular Ageing, University of Glasgow and Honorary Consultant Physician in Stroke and Geriatric Medicine



‘A Stroke Research Academy would provide a formal identity and structure that could provide valuable support to an active research community, connecting researchers and supporting leadership development.’

Professor Chris Price, Professor in Stroke and Applied Health Research, Newcastle University and NIHR National Speciality Lead for Stroke

1. Unlock greater investment and capacity in stroke research

Stroke research is fragmented, underfunded and lags behind other disease areas. The pipeline of researchers is limited and decreasing at a time when the next generation of talent needs to be nurtured and motivated to change and challenge the research landscape for better brain health. We strive to:

- **Establish a national Stroke Research Academy to strengthen the UK’s capacity for stroke research** by attracting, developing, and retaining talented researchers. This first-of-its-kind inclusive initiative will provide a structured, sustainable pathway for multi-professional leadership and skills development, ensuring a robust and enduring talent pipeline for stroke research in the UK. We will start small, testing and learning as we go and scaling what works, and will work with partners to augment what already exists so we are additive rather than duplicative.
- Tell powerful research stories and develop new donor propositions that showcase how investment drives breakthroughs and strengthens the stroke research workforce. This will inspire philanthropists and corporate partners to support the stroke research workforce of tomorrow and encourage co-investment from governments, other charities and industry.
- Following the successful model of the Stroke Data Science Catalyst – a partnership between the Stroke Association, the British Heart Foundation Data Science Centre and Health Data Research UK that is unlocking large-scale linked health data to improve stroke prevention, treatment and recovery – we will **target high-value, shared investments that fund shared capabilities and open doors to our research community**.
- Expand partnerships with funders such as the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), Medical Research Council (MRC), British Heart Foundation (BHF), other charities and industry so stroke secures its share of national research investment.

‘A key challenge is that outcomes from a lot of research aren’t adopted by the NHS, or are adopted very slowly – we need to improve this.’

Professor Gary Ford, Professor of Stroke Medicine, University of Oxford and Consultant Stroke Physician

2. Ensure stroke research is informed by those it serves

Stroke research will only succeed if it reflects the real needs and experiences of those affected by stroke. When people affected by stroke, healthcare professionals and communities play an active role in shaping research, its relevance, quality and impact increase dramatically. Yet people with lived experience are often consulted too late or not at all. Whilst we are considered field leaders in patient and public involvement in research, we can amplify this work to be exemplary for other funders and charities. We will make meaningful involvement the norm, not the exception, across the entire research system.

- Through our research involvement network, Stroke Voices in Research, we will lead the way in embedding lived experience at the heart of stroke research. The group's members – a network of people with lived experience of stroke – already review funding applications, sit on funding panels, and advise researchers. We will strengthen and expand this group to make their expertise more widely available to the stroke research community and beyond.
- We will test, grow and champion models of co-production that universities, funders and healthcare professionals can adopt, so that people affected by stroke are active collaborators, not passive participants – from setting priorities and designing studies to interpreting results and shaping dissemination.
- We will **make the Stroke Association a national gateway for participation**, connecting people affected by stroke to opportunities across the UK, exploring partnerships such as the NIHR's Be Part of Research.
- We will test and grow new ways to tackle barriers to participation, so that people from underserved and marginalised communities are represented and supported – addressing individuals' communication needs, digital access, and cultural or linguistic differences.
- We will sustain and promote the James Lind Alliance Stroke Priority Setting Partnership (PSP) as the foundation for our funding, while aligning with related initiatives such as the Childhood Neurological Conditions PSP, to ensure research priorities reflect the needs of people affected by stroke every stage of life.

By embedding lived experience into every stage of research, we will build a stronger, more inclusive research culture – one that ensures stroke research is truly informed by those it serves and delivers tangible benefits for people affected by stroke.



'The whole point of a team is that you each bring a different perspective, and our perspective is our lived experience. So, by our input we can do things like improve the design so that recruitment is more likely, or we can point out that actually these outcomes are not of particular interest to people who have stroke and perhaps we should be looking at different outcomes.'

Marney, Stroke Voices in Research member

3. Close the gap between discovery and delivery for improved outcomes

Despite major advances in stroke research, progress too often stalls before it reaches clinical practice. People affected by stroke need faster access to innovation and evidence that can improve their lives. All too often, proven or promising approaches stall before reaching the people who can benefit them most. Currently, it can take 15–20 years for new evidence to influence routine care – and stroke survivors cannot wait that long. We will accelerate the journey from discovery to delivery, so great stroke research doesn't take decades to change people's lives.

- We will **evolve our Project Grants to support implementation science and real-world adoption**, shaping funding calls that include a focus on closing the delivery gap between research and practice.
- We will **support and enable delivery-focused pilots that test scalable approaches to stroke treatment and recovery**. These projects will help generate practical learning and build communities of practice that can share insights and drive wider adoption across stroke services.
- We will learn from and partner with system innovation leaders to understand what enables sustainable change and strengthen implementation capability across stroke research and care – ensuring that effective ideas can take root and deliver impact in real-world settings.
- We will embed learning and evaluation within every project we fund, ensuring that insights on implementation, impact and scale are captured, shared and used to inform national policy and practice.
- We will influence funders, health systems and policymakers to recognise the importance of implementation research in stroke – so that the infrastructure, data systems and workforce capacity are in place to deliver change.

By focusing on the science of delivery as well as discovery, we will drive faster, wider and more consistent adoption of evidence-based care – achieving measurable improvements in survivor recovery, independence and prevention. As an NHS partner delivering stroke support services across the UK, we will use our first-hand insight into where the barriers lie to dismantle them and translate research into practice.

'Implementation science is not something that you come in and do later when doing an evaluation. Interventions need to be designed with implementation in mind from the very start and refined as the research project progresses.'

Professor Tracy Finch, Professor of Healthcare and Implementation Science, Northumbria University



'I was told I was a candidate for thrombectomy but couldn't have one because the thrombectomy service didn't run at the weekend. I felt I'd had my hopes dashed.'

Phil, stroke survivor and campaigner

4. Position stroke research as a national health research priority

As the fourth biggest killer in the UK and the leading cause of complex adult disability, the impact of stroke reaches far beyond the individual, also affecting families, communities, the NHS and the wider economy. Yet, despite this enormous personal, healthcare and socioeconomic burden, stroke research has not received the attention or investment it needs or requires to deliver breakthroughs. We will change that by making sure stroke research is recognised, prioritised and funded on a par with other major health conditions.

- Through relentless advocacy and amplifying the voices of people affected by stroke, we will **campaign to ensure stroke research receives its fair share of national investment**. Working with governments, funding agencies, and the wider research sector, we will influence national funders and policymakers to drive sustained growth in public and philanthropic funding – **with the goal of doubling UK investment in stroke research by 2035** to meet the scale of the challenge and opportunity ahead.
- As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), we will collaborate with AMRC and other sector leaders to strengthen the UK's research environment, influence change to overcome the barriers that hold stroke research back, and promote research integrity, transparency and inclusivity across the system.
- We will champion the transformative potential of digital, technology, AI and big data, advocating for the stroke research community to have the tools, infrastructure and resources to develop next-generation diagnostics, trial designs and rehabilitation technologies that improve lives.
- We will amplify the UK's leadership on the global stage, working alongside organisations such as the World Stroke Organisation and the European Stroke Organisation to align with shared international priorities and strengthen the collective voice of stroke research worldwide.

'There is an urgent need to develop clinical trials that are more innovative, efficient, and bring new interventions to patients faster. Using platform trials with more flexible designs, we can bring new interventions into the research study while the research is ongoing, which isn't usually possible with a fixed design trial.'

Professor Amanda Farrin, Director of Edinburgh Clinical Trials Unit, University of Edinburgh



'A coherent UK strategy for stroke research is needed to avoid fragmentation, to help address funding gaps in UK infrastructure, and protect research time for academics.'

Professor Chris Price, Professor in Stroke and Applied Health Research, Newcastle University and NIHR National Speciality Lead for Stroke

Investing in progress:
Building a joined-up pipeline for stroke research



To deliver on our ambitious new research goals, we will refine and strengthen our existing funding schemes while introducing new, targeted mechanisms that drive excellence, innovation and sustainability. Our aim is to ensure Stroke Association funding remains competitive, attractive and impactful – inspiring the next generation of researchers and building a joined-up pipeline for progress.

We are reviewing all our award schemes to ensure they remain responsive to the realities of today's research environment. At a time when many talented researchers are struggling to stay in academic careers, we want our funding to offer both stability and inspiration. By strengthening our schemes, increasing award levels, and introducing flexible and bridging mechanisms, we will create a career-long pipeline that supports stroke researchers from their first idea through to established leadership. Designed to be inclusive, adaptive and strategically targeted, this approach will not only fund excellent research, it will also grow the people, partnerships and momentum needed to sustain progress for decades to come.

Supporting people

Our new Stroke Research Academy will support stroke researchers to maximise their impact, our existing people-focused schemes and continue to create a clear pathway from PhD to senior stroke research leader. In the early days of implementing this strategy, we will review and refresh the funding limits and processes to ensure they deliver high standards within the sector to retain the best talent in stroke.

Our existing schemes, which will continue are:

Postgraduate Fellowships These fellowships open the door for new researchers to begin a career in stroke research. They build the next generation of talent by providing essential research training and experience, supported by expert supervision.

Postdoctoral Fellowships Designed to support the transition to independence, these awards enable early-career researchers to develop their own ideas, lead projects and establish their unique contribution to stroke research. They help retain promising talent at a critical stage when many researchers are lost to the field.

Lectureships Our lectureships create visible mid-career leaders and embed stroke research within UK universities. These posts strengthen academic capacity, expand teaching and mentorship in stroke, and ensure stroke research remains a recognised and respected career path within higher education.

Senior Lectureships These awards recognise and invest in established leaders in stroke research. Senior lecturers play a vital role in shaping the field by mentoring early-career fellows and driving forward our strategic priorities in areas such as rehabilitation, implementation science and data science.



New schemes will include:

Bridge Grants We plan to pilot short-term, flexible awards that provide continuity for excellent researchers whose proposals demonstrate clear merit but narrowly miss full funding. These awards will be rigorously assessed to ensure quality while helping to retain vital expertise, sustain innovation, and keep promising stroke research careers on track.

Funding projects

Our current project grants support innovative, multidisciplinary research that tackles the most urgent priorities identified by people affected by stroke through the James Lind Alliance. Building on their strong legacy of discovery, we will now evolve this scheme to place greater emphasis on implementation science – funding research that not only generates new evidence but also accelerates how that evidence is adopted in real-world care. These grants will continue to act as a springboard to major national and international investment, while driving faster, more consistent improvements in prevention, treatment and recovery.



Leveraging partnerships

We will multiply our impact by deepening collaboration across the stroke research ecosystem. Working alongside major funders such as the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the British Heart Foundation (BHF), we will ensure that stroke remains a visible and embedded priority within national research agendas.

Our partnerships will focus on strengthening the research environment for stroke – from joint fellowships and capacity-building schemes to shared initiatives that nurture talent and leadership, particularly among allied health professionals and other underrepresented disciplines. We will also work with NHS systems across all four nations and delivery partners in stroke care, innovation and quality improvement to align evidence, data and insight in ways that accelerate real-world impact.

Through this connected approach, we can extend the reach, credibility and value of every pound invested in stroke research, so that collaboration is not an afterthought but a defining feature of how we deliver progress.

Accelerating the path from discovery to delivery

Over the lifetime of this strategy, we will create and support new flexible funding schemes and opportunities that provide rapid, catalytic support for innovation. This will include access to dedicated quality improvement funds, designed to complement our research programmes by supporting projects that apply evidence in practice and generate learning that strengthens future research.

We recognise that not all breakthroughs start with large awards or fully formed trials. Some of the most transformative advances begin as small-scale pilots that link research, clinical practice and service improvement. Accelerating the path from discovery to delivery, these new investments will enable researchers to pilot bold, high-potential ideas, spark new collaborations and test proof-of-concept work. They may include early testing of new technologies or rehabilitation models, feasibility studies that explore how proven interventions can be scaled, or small partnership projects with NHS systems.

These schemes will be distinct from our research funding and subject to a different form of review and governance, ensuring clarity of purpose while reinforcing our shared goal of improving outcomes for people affected by stroke. By creating structured space to experiment and learn, we will help promising ideas gain momentum, strengthen the evidence for larger-scale funding and accelerate the translation of research into everyday practice.

‘Research is a fundamental part of what the Stroke Association needs to be doing. It’s vital. It’s an incredibly important part of what survivors can give back.’

Lee, Stroke Voices in Research member



Together, we can bridge discovery and delivery – and build a future where fewer people have strokes, more people survive them, and recovery is faster, fuller, and fairer.

Embedding trust and excellence in research

Our research will be governed by the highest standards of integrity, transparency and inclusion. As a proud member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), we follow a rigorous framework that makes sure every pound we invest delivers maximum benefit for people affected by stroke. The AMRC sets the gold standard for research governance, promoting best practice in peer review, research integrity, and transparency – giving funders, partners and researchers confidence that our processes are fair, robust and evidence-led.

To strengthen the delivery and oversight of this strategy, we will establish a Research Advisory Group, bringing together researchers, healthcare professionals, people affected by stroke and system partners to guide our work. The group will provide independent insight and constructive challenge, so that our research investment remains strategic, inclusive, and impactful.

It will provide strategic advice and insight to guide progress against our goals, highlight opportunities and risks, and help us test, learn and adapt as the research and health environment evolves. By working alongside the wider stroke research community, the Research Advisory Group will ensure our funding schemes, partnerships and priorities remain aligned with the national and international research ecosystem.

It will also help identify where the Stroke Association can add unique value, act collaboratively, and catalyse progress across prevention, treatment and recovery.

Together, we will drive a shared, forward-looking approach to stroke research – one that balances ambition with accountability and keeps our focus firmly on delivering impact for people affected by stroke.

Measuring impact

Our mission is achieved through the real-world impact of our research – through lives changed, systems improved, and new possibilities created for people affected by stroke. Measuring and sharing that impact helps us learn, refine our approach, and stay accountable, but it is the change itself that drives our purpose. We are committed to capturing how our investments in research lead to stronger evidence, influence practice and policy, and ultimately improve outcomes for people affected by stroke.

We will invest not only in research but in understanding what makes it successful – ensuring that our £15 million commitment delivers measurable and meaningful benefit for people affected by stroke.

As we deliver this strategy, we will strengthen our approach to tracking impact – building the tools, partnerships and learning culture needed to understand what drives real change. We will continue to try out new approaches and grow those that show genuine promise. This spirit of innovation will help us to be nimble and responsive in a rapidly changing research and health environment.

This will ensure that we can demonstrate the value of our research to people affected by stroke, researchers, funders and partners, and hold ourselves accountable for making meaningful, lasting progress in line with the goals set out in this strategy.



Conclusion

This strategy marks the beginning of a new era for stroke research, one defined by collaboration, ambition, and urgency. The Stroke Association's £15 million investment is a catalyst for change amongst the researchers, healthcare professionals, funders, policymakers and people affected by stroke who share our vision.

We invite researchers to join us in accelerating discovery, growing capacity, driving innovation and closing the gap between research and everyday care. We ask funders and philanthropists to invest boldly in the next generation of breakthroughs, to build desperately needed capacity and leadership through initiatives such as the new Stroke Research Academy. We call on policymakers and health system leaders to make stroke research a national priority and restore balance to the research landscape. Importantly, we urge people affected by stroke to continue guiding our direction to keep every question, project and outcome grounded in lived experience.

By joining us to shape the next chapter of stroke research, together we can bridge discovery and delivery, restore momentum to stroke research, and arrive at a future where fewer people have strokes, more people survive them, and recovery is faster, fuller and fairer.

Acknowledgements

This strategy has been shaped by the insight, expertise and lived experience of hundreds of people who share a deep commitment to improving life after stroke.

We are especially grateful to the members of Stroke Voices in Research, and to the many researchers, healthcare professionals and professionals from across all four nations who shared their perspectives through workshops, surveys and in-depth interviews. Their honesty, ambition and collective wisdom have helped us understand the realities of stroke research today and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Together, their insights have created a strategy that is grounded in lived experience, informed by evidence and driven by possibility. It reflects the hopes and expectations of people affected by stroke, and the collective determination of those working to prevent, treat and overcome it – uniting us in a shared vision of progress, impact and lasting change.

The Stroke Association provides tailored support to tens of thousands of stroke survivors each year, funds vital stroke research, and campaigns to secure the best care and support for everyone affected by stroke.

Stroke Support Helpline: **0303 3033 100**
From a textphone: **18001 0303 3033 100**
Email: **helpline@stroke.org.uk**
Website: **stroke.org.uk**

Stroke Association

Finding **strength** through **support**

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Also registered in the Isle of Man (No. 945) and Jersey (No. 221), and operating as a charity in Northern Ireland

IN 2526-171