

# A good old novel approach to stroke awareness training

The Stroke Association developed an accessible course, which delivered face to face training and an accredited qualification in Stroke Awareness, to 60 support staff from residential care homes, in the West Midlands and North West. This was achieved with telephone and text follow-ups - with no e-learning.

## Background

Stroke is the leading cause of adult disability in the UK and a major cause of severe disability among people in care homes where, according to National Audit Office statistics, it has affected between 25 and 50 per cent of residents.

The results of stroke are broad ranging, including emotional, behavioural, physical and psychological effects. Therefore, as the care sector grows rapidly so does the demand for stroke awareness among support workers, and the importance of understanding the condition so as to provide effective care for residents.

In the last 20 years the Stroke Association has become established as a leading provider of stroke-specific training in the UK. Until this project the organisation's highly experienced trainers

delivered endorsed courses in their drive to improve the knowledge and understanding of stroke prevention, awareness and management within the care sector.

This project enabled the Stroke Association to devise and deliver its own stroke awareness course, innovatively designed so that it was widely accessible to care workers in residential homes. The new course also enabled the association to secure accreditation for its own trainers from the NCFE so that trainees gained a Level 2 Award in Stroke Awareness.

## What we wanted to achieve

The overall aim of the project has been to improve the care for survivors of stroke, at the same time increasing the confidence, skills and effectiveness of those who work most closely with them. The importance of this issue has been underlined by a report issued in spring 2012 which found that a major concern – raised by 85 per cent of the stroke survivors surveyed – was the lack of understanding of stroke among professionals with whom they came into contact.

Under this umbrella objective, this project sought to create a course:

- designed to be widely accessible to care home staff while being aligned to the QCF framework
- which offered a cost-effective approach for both care homes and the Stroke Association through blended learning

- that would result in more staff holding an accredited qualification in stroke awareness
- that would increase stroke knowledge and specialist skills leading to more effective use of time in the workplace
- that would lead to a replicable, sustainable approach that can be rolled out across the UK
- that supports and takes forward the 2010 Department of Health Strategy for Stroke

## What we did

The Stroke Association designed a course especially for staff in care homes which also developed to be a QCF Level 2 Award qualification. This allowed the Stroke Association to be accredited to deliver the training and to become approved by the NCFE to administer and support an accredited training programme.

While e-learning is almost a standard of training across the country, evidence from the National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People (NAPA) suggests that the most effective method for staff working in care homes is paper-based distance learning. This is because access to computers is rarely available to staff in the workplace or, if it is, time and shift issues can make access difficult. Therefore the blended approach adopted by the Stroke Association comprised the use of a workbook and end-of-course assessment plus two four-hour sessions of face-to-face learning.

This format encouraged learners to do some low level research, linked to their attendance at a training session and to identify health and social care issues linked to a stroke. To increase flexibility to suit the learners, trainers provided additional support via telephone, text and email.

The Stroke Association focused on potential candidates from care homes in the North West and the West Midlands. In these areas respectively, candidates were sought with the help of officers from Manchester City Council and Halton Borough Council. Generally the response was encouraging, particularly in the West Midlands where a waiting list had to be set up.

The training took place between January and March 2013 with two highly experienced Stroke Association trainers providing the two half-day courses for four cohorts of trainees, each with 15 candidates. For each cohort, the training sessions were set a week apart to allow for self-directed study between the face-to-face sessions. This gave each candidate time to complete their workbooks ahead of the second training sessions where they would be assessed and any learning points could be discussed.

Evaluation of the training included feedback forms following the face-to-face sessions to get an immediate feeling for the effectiveness of the training supported by follow-up telephone calls to trainees which allowed them to add anything they might not have felt comfortable writing down.

“The immediate and longer-term benefits of this project involve care home staff achieving their potential through vocational qualifications. They will ultimately drive up care standards for stroke survivors. The project also enabled us to become accredited to deliver the training and this will lead to future training programmes being accredited too.”

Paul Williams, Senior Training Lead

According to Paul Williams, Senior Training Lead, “Additional telephone feedback sessions involving a few candidates and managers of care homes also provided valuable information on how we could improve the training and develop it further.”

Another critically important factor in this project was the feedback from the NCFE that was received at intervals during the accreditation meetings and the approval/moderation meetings. “This also allowed us to see what went well and what things we might have to modify in the future”, comments Paul.

## What we achieved

The responses from the candidates, care home managers and, anecdotally, from residents who have suffered strokes, demonstrate that the course was successful in its design and execution and that it achieved all its aims. Sixty care home staff are now in a position to pass on knowledge and apply new skills with confidence and therefore change the dynamic of stroke care in their workplaces.

As in all innovative approaches to workforce development, some outcomes come as a bonus or are only properly considered with hindsight. One such is that the Stroke Association has had the opportunity to assess just how effective these courses can be in the care home sector – and how welcome they are, given the response to the pilot training courses.

“We are now in a position to consider how we offer this qualification to more staff in care homes across the UK. But we plan to extend the qualification to domiciliary workers, intermediate care and daycentre staff, other adult social care staff and personal assistants too.”

Paul Williams, Senior Training Lead

Another such outcome was the good practice developed between the two trainers who, although conducting the training miles apart, were able to exchange views, timetable assessments and plan any internal verification needed while cross-modifying each other’s assessments. The NCFE reported that they approached a challenging programme impartially and professionally.

The way the course was planned and run has also laid strong foundations for its transferability, sustainability and scalability.

“The focus on care homes was a sharp one for obvious reasons” says Paul. “They’re all potential candidates for the award because they directly affect the wellbeing of stroke survivors – their improved knowledge might help prevent strokes too.”

## What we learnt

Paul Williams reports that a key lesson from the project turned on the decision to use a workbook and classroom approach without any reliance on the use of computers.

“No IT was needed by the candidates. In many care homes, IT is not practicable for care staff. IT in training is so commonplace due to our everyday reliance on apps, phones etc, that not to use it is unusual. In effect, we innovated by applying traditional approaches and then added in some modern communications offered by emails, telephone and texts as a support. Unfortunately, this meant that trainers and assessors sometimes struggled over an individual’s handwriting!”

Another learning which contributed to the Stroke Association’s confidence in the sustainability of this project was the response from trainees. The trainees were thoroughly engaged in their own research and learning stimulated by the workbooks and no one dropped out from any of the four cohorts.

Not least, the Stroke Association’s accreditation as a trainer is one more tool in its armoury of activities that push forward its mission set out so clearly at [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk).

## For more information please contact

Stroke Association  
Tel. 020 7566 1516

## Skills for Care Recommends

This innovative project was a relatively new area for Skills for Care to support. We have developed a qualification and provide funding related to this;

### Guide to qualifications in adult social care



We have developed a Level 2 award and Level 3 certificate in Stroke. Whilst Skills for Care does not directly deliver this training, we may be able to assist around funding.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications)

### Funding

For adult social care employers in England, our funding can help towards the cost of learning and development for Stroke.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/funding](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/funding)

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