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*Reshaping stroke services could r­­­educe disability and save lives*

The Stroke Association has welcomed the launch of the Department of Health’s consultation on reshaping stroke services.

**Brenda Maguire** from the charity said:

“Stroke is a devastating condition which can change lives in an instant. Stroke can happen to anyone, at any age and at any time.  It’s the third biggest killer in Northern Ireland and the leading cause of adult disability.

“We are delighted that the Department of Health is moving forward and exploring options to modernise and improve stroke services. Reform is urgently needed and will save lives, reduce disabilities and help everyone affected by stroke to access the on-going support they need to rebuild their lives.

“There is clear evidence that reshaping stroke services works – creating larger *Hyper Acute Stroke Units* (HASUs) with the equipment and experts to treat stroke patients, all day, every day as well as creating more sustainable services. We believe everyone affected by stroke should get the best treatment and care possible. Reorganising stroke services will help achieve that.

“We will be carefully reviewing the proposals and working with people affected by stroke, carers and experts in the coming weeks to develop our response. We firmly believe this is an exciting opportunity to create a world class stroke service for Northern Ireland. We would encourage everyone to take the opportunity to have their say during this important process”.

The Department of Health launched the consultation on Tuesday 26th March 2019. Information on the consultation can be found here <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/reshaping-stroke-care>

You can find more information on stroke and the Stroke Association’s position on reconfiguration of stroke services [here](https://www.stroke.org.uk/sites/default/files/reorganising_acute_stroke_services_policy.pdf)

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For more information or media interviews please contact Brenda Maguire, Head of Communications at the Stroke Association, by calling 07947273640 or 02890508051 or emailing [Brenda.maguire@stroke.org.uk](mailto:Brenda.maguire@stroke.org.uk)

**Notes to editors:**

A stroke is a brain attack which happens when the blood supply to the brain is cut off, caused by a clot or bleeding in the brain.

When stroke strikes, part of your brain shuts down. And so does a part of you.  That’s because a stroke happens in the brain, the control centre for who we are and what we can do. It happens every five minutes in the UK and changes lives instantly.  Recovery is tough, but with the right specialist support and a ton of courage and determination, the brain can adapt. Our specialist support, research and campaigning are only possible with the courage and determination of the stroke community.

There are around 4000 strokes in Northern Ireland every year and it is a leading cause of disability. There are over 1.2 million people in the UK living with the effects of stroke.

Stroke Association is a charity. We believe in rebuilding lives after stroke.  We work directly with stroke survivors and their families and carers, with health and social care professionals and with scientists and researchers. We campaign to improve stroke care and support people to make the best recovery they can. We fund research to develop new treatments and ways of preventing stroke. The Stroke Helpline (0303 303 3100) provides information and support on stroke. More information can be found at www.stroke.org.uk