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The South London Cardiac and Stroke Network (SLCSN) works with patients, carers, clinicians and other healthcare professionals to create high quality cardiac and stroke services that focus on the patient and are available to all. Patients are always our top priority and are the driving force behind everything we do.

## Accelerating Stroke Improvement

An exciting new priority has been launched across the nation, the Accelerating Stroke Improvement Programme. This initiative aims to build on the progress we've made in stroke care. We've already made great improvements in acute stroke care and public awareness and understanding. Now we will focus on strategies for:

- Stroke prevention
- Improved transfer of care for patients and
- Enhanced long-term care and follow up

This new programme requires dedication from everyone concerned with stroke care, including the Department of Health, PCTs, providers and the South London Cardiac and Stroke Network. According to the briefing notes that accompanied a slide deck detailing the ASI programme, networks will play a critical role in supporting work at the interface.

We are excited to be at the centre of this programme and have already begun discussions and plans to help our partner organisations reach these goals. We have added a new ASI page on our website which we will continuously update to track our progress through the year.

All ASI documents can be viewed on our website, [www.slcsn.nhs.uk/stroke-accelerate.html](http://www.slcsn.nhs.uk/stroke-accelerate.html).

### Lower your risk!

Learn how to lower your risk of high blood pressure and stroke through the NHS Choices website.

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### Let us know!

Submit your ideas:

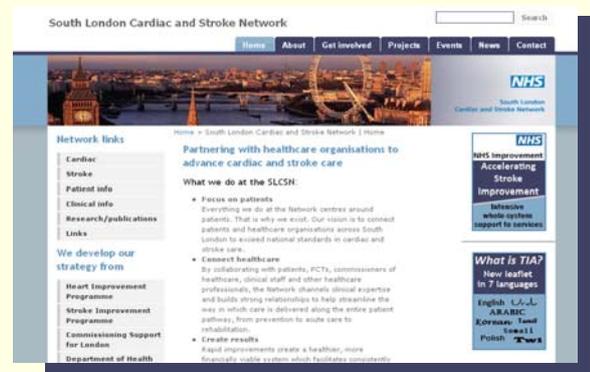
e-mail: [People@slcsn.nhs.uk](mailto:People@slcsn.nhs.uk)  
phone: 020 8812 5953

## SLCSN website launched

We are pleased to launch our new website, [www.slcsn.nhs.uk](http://www.slcsn.nhs.uk). The new site reflects the comprehensive work of the South East London and South West London networks and includes information for both clinicians and patients.

On the site you can find documents and guidelines produced by the Network, upcoming events, health news, links to cardiac and stroke organisations and details about our projects and meetings.

We encourage you to bookmark our site and visit often to keep informed of our activities and projects. If there is anything you would like to see posted, please let us know via e-mail, [People@slcsn.nhs.uk](mailto:People@slcsn.nhs.uk), or phone, 020 8812 5950.



## Patient and carer diaries lead to new recommendations in cardiac care

The SLCSN understands that patients' views and those of their families are integral to improving cardiac and stroke care in South London. The most valuable is candid input from them about their experiences, especially at the point of delivery.

We worked with 15 people who agreed to share their views on their cardiac care through diaries.



Patients and families were invited to record their thoughts during their experiences from pre-assessment through discharge. The results were eye-opening and have led to recommendations that aim to alleviate concerns for a better patient experience.

We found that support and information following discharge is a primary concern, both for patients and carers. Patients expressed the need for improved follow up, such as a phone call within the first few days following discharge. Carers revealed levels of anxiety in supporting patients in their homes in contrast to the high levels of support found in hospital. Relatedly, patients felt that rehabilitation should begin soon after discharge to avoid frustration and confusion in care.

We are working to develop a standardised discharge pack that can be given to patients. It will provide clear advice and contact information for clinical staff as well as for local support groups. The importance of early rehabilitation will also be emphasised, which aims to reduce patient anxiety and improve their outcomes.



## Cardiac patients, partners are looked after at hospital support group

Cardiac rehabilitation is an integral part of the care of patients who have a cardiac event and aims to help them resume their normal activities. It starts when patients are in hospital and then continues after discharge. In South London there are 14 programmes based both in hospitals and community settings. St Helier Hospital in Carshalton, run by Hilary Cook, clinical specialist in cardiac rehabilitation, is one such programme. Each year it cares for more than 200 cardiac patients.

Realising that patients' partners also need help, Heartshare was launched 11 years ago. Heartshare gathers these caring people to share problems and ideas in support of helping each other and their partners.

More than a decade later, the group continues to meet monthly, under Hilary's authority. Once a year, partners and patients join together for coffee and an informative talk from a cardiac consultant who answers pressing questions.

Sirkka Thomas, a Brompton qualified cardiac nurse, health visitor, counsellor, and wife of a cardiac patient led the group from January 1999 and January 2010. Sirkka promotes the philosophy of art and health. During these meetings, she asked members to illustrate their immediate thoughts with oil pastels on paper. She then translated these images into watercolour. These works of art now hang in St Helier's coronary care unit and rehab department. The paintings serve as inspiration for all future patients and partners.

Since its inception, Heartshare has welcomed 1,300 partners to help banish doubts and fears, boost self-confidence and show there is life for patients and partners after a heart attack.

For further information, contact Hilary Cook on 020 8296 3577.

If you need information on other patient groups in South London, please e-mail us at [People@slcsn.nhs.uk](mailto:People@slcsn.nhs.uk) or call us on 020 8812 5950.

## Arrhythmia Alliance to hold South London meeting 23 June

The Arrhythmia Alliance will hold a patient and carers meeting on 23 June at Selsdon Park Hotel in Croydon. Please register to join them if you:

- have an arrhythmia or atrial fibrillation
- suffer from syncope (fainting) or reflex anoxic seizures
- have an ICD



The meeting will explain what to expect from your GP, new drugs and developments in

arrhythmia care and how you can get the most from your local services. You'll get to chat with fellow patients and carers, too.

Registration costs £13.50 per person which includes refreshments and a light lunch. To register, visit the Regional Meetings section on [www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk](http://www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk). Or contact Melanie Quinlan via e-mail ([melanie@heartrhythmcharity.org.uk](mailto:melanie@heartrhythmcharity.org.uk)) or telephone (017 8945 1822).

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## Lewisham Stroke Club visit

Dr Suparna Das and Sara Nelson, assistant directors for the SLCSN, attended the Lewisham Stroke Association Stroke Club in March to talk to stroke survivors and carers about developments in stroke care across London and the proposed new Lewisham pathway. They listened to people's experiences and gained agreement for help with future work to improve care around stroke.



On a national level, the Care Quality Commission will review the care and support provided to people who have had a stroke and their carers. One element of the review is to evaluate the information that is currently given to patients to make sure it is understandable and complete. Members of the Stroke Club kindly agreed to help us with this.

Further details are available on the Web:

[www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk) - Care Quality Commission  
[www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk) - Find the Lewisham Stroke Club and others in your area (Click on *In Your Area*)

## SLCSN staff present at the National Cardiac Conference

The National Cardiac Conference was held on 24 March and offered inspiring keynote speeches by Professor Sir Roger Boyle, Department of Health national director for heart disease and stroke, and Sir Bruce Keogh, NHS medical director.

Attendees learned how we can continue working together to improve services and care for cardiac patients and reduce inequalities in access and outcomes.

SLCSN senior project managers Laura Gillam and Michelle Bull presented at the conference. Laura discussed the cardiac surgery services re-design at St George's and the resulting benefits to future patients. Michelle provided a comprehensive perspective on the national projects in cardiac rehabilitation across South East and South West London.



Spotlight on...



**connect**

the communication disability network

Connect is a charity for people living with aphasia, a communication disability which usually occurs after stroke. They aim to improve the lives of people living with aphasia and communication disability, equipping them to re-connect with life.

Want to know more? Visit their website, [www.ukconnect.org](http://www.ukconnect.org) to read inspirational stories of people living with aphasia and join their newsletter, *Get Connected* to learn how to get involved.

If you would like more information on Connect, please call Sally McVicker on 020 7367 0862.



## What is the SLCSN?

The South London Cardiac and Stroke Network partners with healthcare organisations across the region to advance cardiac and stroke care.

- **Focusing on patients**  
Everything we do at the Network centres around patients. That is why we exist. Our vision is to connect patients and healthcare organisations across South London to exceed national standards in cardiac and stroke care.
- **Connecting healthcare**  
By collaborating with patients, PCTs, commissioners of healthcare, clinical staff and other healthcare professionals, the Network channels clinical expertise and builds strong relationships to help streamline the way in which care is delivered across the entire patient pathway, from prevention to acute care to rehabilitation.
- **Creating results**  
Rapid improvements create a healthier, more financially viable system which facilitates consistently high-quality care for all South Londoners.

## Contact us

We are always interested in hearing from you! If there is anything you would like to see in a future newsletter, please let us know: [People@slcsn.nhs.uk](mailto:People@slcsn.nhs.uk) or 020 8812 5950.

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