

'No decision about me without me'

Improving the quality of services through enhanced patient communication

The London Stroke Networks have always embraced the new mantra of the NHS. We believe that patient involvement is paramount to every area of the health of our patients: from decision making, to care planning, to the review process.

The London Stroke Networks have partnered with Connect, the communication disability network to increase understanding of communication disabilities and help create meaningful change in the capital for patients with aphasia and other communication disabilities.

A joint project between the **North East London Cardiac and Stroke Network**, the **South London Cardiac and Stroke Network** and **Connect: the Communication Disability Network** aims to improve access to services for stroke survivors with communication disabilities.

A group of 25 Communications Champions received training from Connect, providing them with the **confidence and practical tools to improve the quality of communication** for all service users. The Champions are committed to cascading this training to their colleagues, raising awareness and encouraging them to act. **Small changes make a big difference in communication access.**

By March 2011 the project hopes to have **trained more than 600 people** from health, social and voluntary sector services.



Health information – in any language



The London Stroke Networks have created patient information sheets on a wide variety of topics. This information is then translated into the most common dialects in each sector.

Standardised leaflets ensure that all patients have equitable access to vital health, no matter what language they speak.

The **North West and North Central London Cardiac and Stroke Networks** have set up eight pilot **Conversation Partners** schemes across the region, offering support and companionship to patients with aphasia.

Through the **Conversation Partners** scheme patients with aphasia are provided regular contact to a volunteer who has been equipped with training from **Connect: the Communication Disability Network**. These **dedicated one-to-one conversations** between the volunteer and the patient take place in the patient's home. **Both parties win**: the patient is empowered through increased confidence and the volunteer receives increased social enjoyment through the opportunity to converse with these patients.

The eight pilots will be evaluated in early 2011. Already **more than 24 healthcare professionals and 24 patients with aphasia** have been trained to set up and deliver local schemes.

For more information on Connect, please visit ukconnect.org.

Connecting with patients across the capital.

The London Cardiac and Stroke Networks bring together patients, GPs, commissioners and providers for improved patient outcomes along the entire pathway.

