

Cross-Party Group Annual Report

Cross Party Group Details

Cross Party Group Title:

Cross Party Group on Stroke

Group membership and office holders

Name of Group Chair:

Dr Altaf Hussain MS

Names of other Members of the Senedd:

Mark Isherwood MS, Mike Hedges MS, Mabon ap Gwynfor MS

Name of Secretary and Organisation:

Angela Contestabile, Policy and Influencing Lead for Wales, Stroke Association (until 28/01/2026)

George Moore, Public Affairs and Campaigns Officer for Wales, Stroke Association (from 28/01/2026)

Names of other external members and organisations represented:

Dr Shakeel Ahmad, Cardiff and the Vale Health Board

Niki Turner, NHS Performance and Improvement

Other meetings of the Group since the last AGM

Meeting 1

Date of Meeting:

24th September 2025

Attendees:

Angela Contestabile

Katie Chappelle

Peter Hooper

Altaf Hussain MS

Mark Major

David Rees MS

Christine Owen

Tamara Williams

Ceri Jackson

George Moore

Sokina Miah

Lynn Preece

Adele Griffiths

Llinos Wyn Parry

Vanessa Hayward

Jackie Irwin

Anurag Saxena

Kirsty Rees

Summary of the issues discussed:

12:00 – Welcome and Buffet Lunch

- Informal networking and refreshments.

12:30 – Introduction (Altaf Hussain MS)

- Welcomed attendees and outlined the purpose of the meeting: to review progress on stroke awareness and discuss next steps for the Act FAST / Cam NESA campaign.

12:35 – What We Are Asking For and Why (Katie Chappelle)

- **Current Situation:**
 - Wales has not run a full Act FAST campaign since 2018.
 - In 2023, a small digital campaign was delivered using underspend, but no structured national campaign.
 - Ministerial commitment was made in 2023, but no delivery to date.
 - **Impact of Lack of Campaign:**
 - Around 50% of stroke patients in Wales self-present at hospital, compared to UK average of 25%.
 - Delays in treatment: onset-to-arrival time in Wales is 6h 41m vs 4h 4m in England.
 - Thrombectomy cases: 38 in Wales vs 1,154 in England (Jan - Mar 2025).
 - **Evidence from England:**
 - Regular campaigns improve awareness and outcomes.
 - 91% of surveyed adults in England would call 999 if they saw stroke symptoms.
 - **Key Misconceptions Addressed:**
 - Spillover from England's campaign is not enough. Wales needs its own bilingual, culturally tailored campaign.
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- What We Are Asking For:
 - Confirmed delivery timeline for a bilingual, biennial campaign.
 - Funding commitment from Welsh Government.
 - Clear ownership of campaign delivery.
 - Coproduction with stroke survivors and stakeholders.

12:55 – Questions and Discussion (Altaf Hussain MS)

- Members discussed:
 - Barriers to public awareness in Wales (language, geography, cultural hesitancy).
 - Importance of bilingual messaging and survivor-led content.
 - Need for accountability and clear timelines from Welsh Government.

13:15 – Next Steps and Recommendations (Altaf Hussain MS)

- Agreed actions:
 - Prepare an updated case for the campaign.
 - Engage with Welsh Government to secure:
 - Funding and timeline.
 - Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care support.
 - Continue cross-party collaboration and stakeholder engagement.

13:25 – Close and Call to Action (Altaf Hussain MS)

- Reiterated urgency: public awareness is a weak link in stroke care.
- Called on all members to advocate for immediate action.

Link to video recording of meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_hjVS1NtY0

Meeting 2

Date of Meeting:

28th January 2026

Attendees:

George Moore

Angela Contestabile

Helen Hak

Natasha Collins

Dulaine Mulcahy

Lucy Thomson

Gillian Mead

Ceri Eady

Jonathan Hewitt

Sam Abraham

Jessica Williams

Neil Miles

James Broughton

Niki Turner

Jane Godijn

Sali Curtis

Nicola Price

Gareth Lee

Janine Jones

Joanne Abbott-Davies

Shakeel Ahmad

Tracey Williams

Tom Hughes

Katie Chappelle

Lynn Preece

Llinos Wyn-Parry

Damian Evans

Laura Thomas

Mark Major

Altaf Hussain MS

Mike Hedges MS

Mark Isherwood MS

Clare McGrath

Claire Richards

Adele Griffiths

Louise Coombe

Bronwen Morgan Jones

Bethan Edwards

Rachel Lewis

Peter Hooper

Manju Krishnan

Summary of the issues discussed:

Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair (Dr Altaf Hussain MS) welcomed attendees in the room and those joining remotely via Microsoft Teams.

The purpose of the meeting was outlined by the chair as the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Cross-Party Group on Stroke, alongside a session focusing on stroke prevention.

The Chair then discussed the purpose of the Cross-Party Group. He said that the purpose is to bring together people with lived experience, clinicians, policymakers and organisations committed to improving stroke prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and life-after-stroke support in Wales.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Election of Chair of the Cross Party Group

- **Proposal:** Altaf to continue as Chair of the Cross-Party Group on Stroke
- **Proposed by:** Mike Hedges MS
- **Seconded by:** Mark Isherwood MS
- **Outcome:** Altaf accepted the role and thanked members for their continued support.

Appointment of Secretariat of the Cross Party Group

- **Proposal:** George Moore, Public Affairs and Campaigns Officer for Wales, Stroke Association to become Secretariat for the Cross-Party Group on Stroke.
- **Proposed by:** Mark Isherwood MS
- **Seconded by:** Mike Hedges MS
- **Outcome:** Appointment agreed.

Lived Experience of Stroke - Damian (Stroke Survivor)

The Cross-Party Group then moved on to the discussing stroke prevention. First, we heard from Damian, a stroke survivor from South Wales.

Damian shared his personal experience of suffering a stroke in August 2022 at a relatively young age. He described:

- Initial symptoms being dismissed as alcohol-related

- Delays in ambulance response leading to self-presentation at hospital
- Receiving thrombolysis within the treatment window
- Significant physical and psychological impacts, including loss of mobility and speech
- The absence of local stroke ward provision and the need to self-discharge to access private rehabilitation
- The crucial role played by his partner, family, and the Stroke Association
- Lifestyle changes following stroke, including weight loss, exercise, and reducing alcohol intake.

Damian emphasised the inequality of access to rehabilitation, particularly for those without the finances to access it privately, and called for greater investment in stroke rehabilitation and life-after-stroke services.

Damian was then asked questions by the group, leading onto a discussion on the value of the stroke support groups and peer networks, particularly in:

- Reducing isolation
- Supporting confidence post-stroke
- Helping individuals understand recovery trajectories
- Encouraging engagement with rehabilitation and lifestyle change

It was noted that peer support is a vital component of recovery, particularly for younger stroke survivors.

Presentation from the Clinical Lead for Stroke, Dr Shakeel Ahmad

A presentation was delivered on stroke prevention in Wales by Dr Shakeel Ahmad, Clinical Lead for Stroke in Wales. This presentation included:

- The scale of stroke incidence during the meeting period itself, noting that within the hour around 12-14 people will have a stroke, with at least 1 being in Wales.
 - Stroke has modifiable risk factors, including atrial fibrillation (AF), hypertension, cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, alcohol, diet and obesity
 - Evidence that up to 90% of strokes are preventable
 - The impact of lowering blood pressure on stroke risk
 - The significant role of AF in causing severe and disabling strokes
 - Successful Wales-wide initiatives to improve AF detection and anticoagulation
 - Cost savings associated with prevention compared to long-term care
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- Health inequalities linked to deprivation, ethnicity, and rurality
- The need for targeted prevention in high-risk communities
- The role of digital tools and wearable technologies as awareness aids (not diagnostic replacements)

Dr Shakeel Ahmad was then asked a range of questions around wearable technology devices. Key discussion points included:

- The need to balance innovation with clinical accuracy
- Ensuring wearable and digital tools support, rather than replace, medical assessment
- Improving public understanding of blood pressure “safe ranges”

Questions were also asked around how we can work to reduce health inequalities in Wales. This discussion touched upon:

- Engaging community leaders, faith groups and pharmacies to reach underserved populations
- Strengthening links between public health teams, primary care and voluntary organisations

Presentation from the Stroke Association’s Policy and Influencing Lead, Angela Contestabile

Angela Conestabile, the Policy and Influencing Lead at the Stroke Association, then delivered a presentation on why stroke prevention is everyone’s business, and what needs to happen next to prevent as many strokes as possible. This presentation touched upon:

- Delivery and accountability for the updated Quality Statement for Stroke
- Embedding stroke as a priority in the next Programme for Government
- Scaling up targeted prevention, including blood pressure and AF detection
- Strengthening and sustaining life-after-stroke services
- Tackling inequalities through better data, transparency and reporting
- Supporting a national ACT FAST / Cam NESAs campaign
- Ensuring long-term funding for voluntary sector services as core system partners

Angela also emphasised that stroke should be treated as a blueprint for improving the wider NHS.

There was also a wider discussion within the meeting following Angela’s presentation noting the importance of stronger clinical input in policy decisions, as well as the need for clear national leadership to ensure consistency in services across Wales.

Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked all speakers and attendees for their contributions, highlighting:

- The strength of evidence and lived experience shared
- The urgency of acting collectively
- The importance of sustained cross-party collaboration
- The role of technology, prevention, and community support in improving outcomes

The meeting closed with a commitment to continue advancing stroke prevention and care in Wales.

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Professional lobbyists, voluntary organisations and charities the Group have met during the previous year.

[names of lobbyists/organisations/charities should be included as follows, e.g.]

Name of Organisation:

NHS Performance and Improvement

Welsh Government

British Heart Foundation

NHS Wales

We have met with the above in the capacity of asking people to attend and contribute to the Cross-Party Group

Name of Group:

Cross Party Group on Stroke – FAST – September 2025

Name of Organisation:

NHS Performance and Improvement

NHS Wales

Welsh Government

British Heart Foundation

We have met with the above in the capacity of asking people to attend and contribute to the Cross-Party Group

Name of Group:

Cross Party Group on Stroke – Prevention / AGM – January 2026

Name of Organisation:

NHS Performance and Improvement

Welsh Government

British Heart Foundation

NHS Wales

We have met with the above in the capacity of asking people to attend and contribute to the Cross-Party Group

Annual Financial Statement

Cross Party Group Title:

Cross Party Group on Stroke

Date:

06/02/26

Name of Chair:

Dr Altaf Hussain MS

Name of Secretary and Organisation:

Current Secretary George Moore, Stroke Association (from 28.01.2026)

Angela Contestabile, Stroke Association (until 28.01.2026)

Title	Description	Amount
Group's Expenses	Catering provided by the Senedd, paid for by the Stroke Association	£626.40
Costs of all goods	None	None
Benefits received by the group or individuals members from external bodies	None	None
Any financial support or other support.	None	None
Total N/A		N/A

Services provided to the Group, such as hospitality.

All hospitality paid for [include the name of the group/organisation].

Date	Name and description of provider	Costs
24.09.2025	Stroke Association – Catering costs booked through the Senedd	£244.20
28.01.2026	Stroke Association – Catering costs booked through the Senedd	£382.20
Total		£626.40