

# **Future Arrangements for Stroke Rehabilitation Services**

## **Briefing Document**

### **Introduction**

This document has been produced to provide information about stroke rehabilitation services within the Health Board, to advise of recent issues experienced by the service, actions undertaken and to set out proposals for how these services could be delivered in the future. It is important that everyone who has an interest in stroke services has an opportunity to understand the proposals and to let us know their views.

### **Recent service issues and actions**

Stroke rehabilitation services in the health board have for some time been delivered from three different sites; Nevil Hall Hospital in Abergavenny, Royal Gwent Hospital in Newport and Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr in Ystrad Mynach. Maintaining safe staffing levels (especially medical staff) across the three sites had become increasingly difficult and in 2023, it was recognised that staffing levels had reached a point where it was no longer possible to ensure consistent, safe service delivery. As a result, an urgent service change took place whereby services were centralised at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr in Ystrad Mynach. This change was approved by our public Board meeting and implemented in November 2023, with wide communication to staff and the public. Advance discussion and agreement also took place with Llais (the national independent body set up by the Welsh Government to give the people of Wales a stronger voice in their health and social care services).

Whilst this change was undertaken on an urgent basis, the centralisation of the service addressed findings of an independent review of the service (undertaken by the national 'Getting It Right First Time' clinical team), which had been commissioned by the health board in 2022. The change was also very similar to that seen in many other stroke rehabilitation services across the UK, where centralisation has created stronger and larger clinical teams who are able to provide more concentrated rehabilitation therapy and increase the long-term benefit for patients.

### **Our experience following the urgent change**

Whilst the temporary centralisation involved detailed planning and a number of service challenges, it is considered that significant service benefits have been achieved as a result of the change. These include the following:-

- More robust medical cover, providing the ability to support development of resident doctors
- A streamlined stroke model with improvements in the communication with the acute stroke unit
- Consistent therapy from a centralised specialist team, providing improving cross-cover of staffing
- Enhanced staff collaboration and multi-disciplinary workforce development
- A more focussed communication pathway with Community Neuro Rehabilitation Team

All of the above experiences have been reviewed carefully by the health board when considering what would be the best long-term arrangements for the stroke rehabilitation service. Given the benefits that have been seen over the past 18 months, and a continued increase in demand for stroke services, it is considered that it would not be desirable or in the interests of stroke patients to attempt to split the service back into two or more sites, as this would bring a high risk of major staffing difficulties, inconsistent therapy support and poor patient experience. It has therefore been concluded that the best way forward would be to make permanent the current arrangements where all stroke rehabilitation services for the health board are delivered from a specialist centre at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr in Ystrad Mynach. There are a number of reasons why this is considered to be the best option for the future:-

- It will reinforce all the benefits that have been seen since the temporary change
- It will enable a strong multi-disciplinary team of staff to grow and develop a centre of excellence for stroke rehabilitation at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr
- It is consistent with changes to stroke rehabilitation units across the UK
- It will allow the health board to adapt the temporary accommodation to ensure it is designed to best support rehabilitation in the future e.g. specialist stroke treatment and therapy areas

### **Seeking the Views of the Public**

Although our experience has strongly suggested that a centralised stroke rehabilitation unit provides the best model for safe, sustainable and high-quality services, before any final decision is made there is a need for the Health Board to engage with service users, staff, supporting services, voluntary groups and all other stakeholders. It is important that all those with an interest in the service have the opportunity to understand the proposals, to provide full feedback and to raise any queries or concerns for response. This will provide valuable information that will influence final decisions and service details. We will also use the information received to update our Equalities Impact Assessment.

Examples of where we would like your views include: -

- Is our current thinking for future stroke rehabilitation services clear and sensible?
- What do you think of our conclusion that maintaining the centralised service at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr is the best way forward for stroke patients?
- Do you have any concerns about our plans?
- What other factors would you like us to consider?

### **How will the Health Board do this?**

In order to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to make their views known, the Health Board is initiating a 12-week period of engagement, involving the following: -

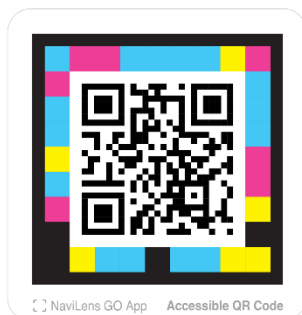
- Prominent display of posters / information in communities and service areas
- Dedicated information page on Health Board website, to include FAQs, access to patient survey (with option of paper version), contact points / numbers and updated as plans progress
- Face to face public information sessions / engagement events
- Social media messaging
- Emails to 2000+ stakeholders
- WhatsApp Update Channel
- Presentations to stakeholders including patient groups
- Management meetings for internal NHS stakeholders

It is planned that the engagement period will run from **9.00am on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2025 until 5.00pm on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026.**

### **How can people make their views known?**

Views can be shared by any of the following means: -

- Complete our survey which can be accessed via the Health Board web site or via this QR and URL code below



[abuhb.nhs.wales/stroke-rehab](http://abuhb.nhs.wales/stroke-rehab)

- Attend one of our public meetings, where you can find out more about the proposals and ask any questions of Health Board / stroke service staff. These have been arranged as itemised overleaf.

## Schedule of Events

Date	Meeting Time	Venue
Thu 6th Nov	4.30pm - 6pm	Education Centre, Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, Ystrad Mynach
Thu 13 <sup>th</sup> Nov	4.30pm – 6pm	Olive Tree, Edlogan Way, Cwmbran, NP44 2JJ
Wed 19 <sup>th</sup> Nov	5.30pm – 7pm	Roberts Room, Bridges Centre <u>Monmouth</u> , NP25 5AS
Wed 26 Nov	4pm – 5.30pm	Tabor Centre, 18 Davies St, Brynmawr, NP23 4AD
Thu 4 <sup>th</sup> Dec	2pm – 4pm	Gwent Stroke Voices group, Risca Library, Tredegar St, Risca
Mon 15 <sup>th</sup> Dec	5pm – 6.30pm	Stocktonville Centre, Gelli Road, Tredegar, NP22 3 <sup>RD</sup>
Wed 7 <sup>th</sup> Jan	5.30pm – 7pm	Education Centre, Nevill Hall Hospital, Abergavenny
Wed 14 <sup>th</sup> Jan	3.30pm – 5pm	Stow Park Community Centre, Brynhyfryd Road Newport, NP20 4FX
Mon 19 <sup>th</sup> Jan	4pm – 5.30pm	On-line session via Teams
Wed 28 <sup>th</sup> Jan	5.30pm – 7pm	Dennis Puddle Room, Blaenavon Workman’s Hall

- Contact us by e-mail with any comments or to register onto the online meetings at [ABB.PlanningDepartment@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:ABB.PlanningDepartment@wales.nhs.uk)
- Contribute to any social media conversations via the Health Board’s pages on **Facebook and Instagram**

### **What will happen after the engagement period?**

Once the engagement period is complete, all responses and views will be collated and an engagement report prepared. This will be shared with the Llais and conclusions reached regarding whether a final decision can be made on future stroke rehabilitation services, or whether further actions are required.

Subject to the discussions with Llais, we may wish to enter a period of formal consultation and should we do that we will once again invite your views.