



Overview of The Irish Heart Foundation Stroke Connect Service (SCS).

The Irish Heart Foundation **Stroke Connect Service (SCS)** is a weekly telephone support service for newly discharged stroke patients and all stroke survivors who need practical and emotional support post-stroke.

What the service provides:

The Stroke Connect Service provides a structured programme of weekly phone calls to give support and encouragement to stroke survivors to make the best recovery possible and ensure they have the information they need to live well post-stroke.

After completing the Stroke Connect Service programme stroke survivors can connect to additional supports provided by the Irish Heart Foundation, depending on need.

The programme lasts for 8 weeks however there is the option to extend this period if needed.

How do you access the service?

To access the service please complete the referral form (available to download from our website) and email to referrals@irishheart.ie or you can send it by post to:

The Stroke Service Coordinator,
The Stroke Connect Service,
The Irish Heart Foundation,
17-19 Lower Rathmines Road,
Rathmines,
Dublin 6
D06C780

Criteria for referral:

Adult stroke patients who have been newly discharged home from an acute hospital or anyone who has had a stroke in the past.

The person needs to be medically stable and have the ability to engage with the service with support from carers/family if needed.

We also support carers and family members by signposting or signing them up for our carer supports. However, the main focus of the service is to support the stroke patient.

If the stroke patient has an acquired communication disorder that impedes engagement with phone conversations, with their permission, we can provide assistance to their carers instead.

The focus of the weekly phone calls is to:

- Give support and encouragement to stroke survivors to help them make the best recovery possible
- Ensure survivors have the information they need to live well post-stroke

After referral to the service, an Irish Heart Foundation nurse will phone the client to complete a thorough needs assessment. The objective of the assessment is to understand the client's needs and difficulties to allow staff and volunteers to:

- Set meaningful recovery goals.
- Use the needs assessment as a guiding document to provide ongoing support.

The coordinator/volunteer will then work with the client over a period of up to 8 weeks, or less depending on need.

They can also work with the client's carer or family by offering support and guidance, with the permission of the client.

The aims of the Stroke Connect Service:

- Work in partnership with the client to empower them to drive their own recovery.
- Address recovery goals identified in the needs assessment.
- Provide information and guidance for stroke survivors and their carers/family.
- Educate on stroke -increase understanding of the effects of stroke and the most common symptoms post-stroke e.g., fatigue, mood changes, etc.
- Promote emotional support through referral to 1-1 peer support or counselling.
- Signpost to other community supports and services that may help e.g. social prescribing, public health nurse, citizens information, Quest, Headway, ABI Ireland, MABS, IWA, Family Carers Ireland.
- Link in with the client's clinical stroke team on their behalf, where appropriate.
- Support the client to navigate the healthcare system.
- Support physical wellbeing through exercise classes and secondary prevention advice.
- Escalate calls as appropriate where there is a medical concern thereby providing a robust early warning system for patients who may be at risk of recurrent stroke.
- Promote self-management and coping skills for low mood, fatigue, and isolation that are common post stroke.

Outcomes of the Stroke Connect Service:

- Increase clients' wellbeing and quality of life through the use of validated measurement tools.
- Secondary prevention -decrease the risk of secondary stroke by providing education, information, support, and the escalation of medical concerns.
- Increase social connection, confidence, and participation in purposeful activity and peer support.
- Increase mobility and functioning through exercise interventions.
- Promote access to other community supports using a social prescribing approach.

After the client has completed the SCS programme, their assigned coordinator will advise them of the next strand of service appropriate to their needs.

There is a choice of long and short-term service options provided by the Irish Heart Foundation that clients can be referred to after they have completed the SCS.

Further/ongoing supports:

Short Term options (to run several times a year depending on need):

- Online fatigue management
- Mindfulness for health and well-being
- Music therapy for aphasia
- Return to work post-stroke
- Brain gym—group cognitive skills
- Learning to Live with aphasia
- Take Charge - an evidence-based talking intervention designed by The Medical Institute of New Zealand to help people with their recovery after stroke.

Long term options:

- The Irish Heart Foundation's private Life After stroke Facebook support page
- Access to online regional peer-to-peer support groups
- The Monday social club-which involves expert speakers, music, reminiscence, quizzes, and social chat.
- Young Stroke Survivor Network (YSSN)-online- open to all young stroke survivors
- Monthly regional meetings * to commence Summer 2022
- Online exercise sessions
- A Stroke of Heart programme which includes online art and creative writing classes, art exhibitions, and blog
- Carers monthly online sessions which provide information and advice for caring for someone post-stroke or a heart event

Other options include:

- Short-term counselling
- Peer-to-peer support
- Carers closed Facebook group offering peer support, information, and advice
- Befriending -linking in with a volunteer for a social chat
- Stay Connected -Keep in touch via a quarterly newsletter, digital and print resources

Please contact strokeservices@irishheart.ie or Tel: 01 6685001 for further information.