

WEST MIDLANDS ISDN Newsletter

August 2025 Edition



ACUTE SITE VISIT FOLLOW UPS

As part of our continued follow up site visits with hyper acute stroke centres, the ISDN met with the stroke teams at Hereford County Hospital of Wye Valley Trust (WVT) and University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) at the end of July. It was great to hear about the updates on our recommendations and progress made with delivering the acute pathway and the efforts to improve thrombectomy and thrombolysis referral rates.

At WVT, we noted a number of positive feedback, these include 1) participation in TASC 2 programme 2) cohesive working of a small but efficient team advocating MDT working and clinical leadership 3) improved thrombolysis rates, CTP and quality of MT referrals. However, there are ongoing challenges with the lack of psychology, gym space and the fragility of CNS workforce.

At UHB, we heard about a number of improvements made and under review. These include reviewing increasing bed capacity, business case for a 7-day therapy service being put forward and mechanical thrombectomy repatriation pathway implementing improving patient flow and recovery. There were a number of actions for the ISDN to support with ongoing challenges and these include planning a workshop for MT referrals to address the communications concerns between spoke sites to improve the referrals pathway, and ASU site visits.

Summary reports with recommendations/actions will be shared in the coming weeks.



SQUIRE EVENT: POST PROJECT SUPPORT

On 6th August the Midlands SQuRe Post-Project Support event convened online, bringing together clinicians, project leads, ICB representatives, ISDN colleagues and third-sector partners to discuss practical ways to sustain improvements once short-term funding ends. The session was hosted by SQuRe and set out to share proven approaches, reduce duplication and leave teams with immediate, achievable next steps.

A FutureNHS presentation in collaboration with NHSE highlighted the value of a single digital hub for hosting training materials, creating communities of practice and surfacing simple outcome data to support business cases.

The Stroke Association outlined national and local offers that projects can align with to route patients into existing services and amplify patient stories, while case studies showed how embedding outcome measures, using training videos in induction and repurposing students/volunteers can maintain activity after funding ceases.

Breakout room discussions included: surfaced common themes across regions: the need for robust, continuous data collection to underpin business cases; executive-level buy-in to translate pilot benefits into commissioned services; creative use of existing platforms (FuturesNHS, local YouTube channels) for training and dissemination; and harnessing patient stories alongside quantitative evidence to influence ICBs. Participants also discussed the practicalities of platform choice (keep conversations consolidated to one hub where possible) and low-cost sustainability tactics such as standardising paperwork, sharing training materials, and routing patients into national third-sector offers.

Attendees left equipped with practical next steps and contacts to explore embedding project outputs into existing services and commissioning discussions.



ACUTE SERVICES SSNAP MEETING

The first regional acute services SSNAP meeting was held recently and provided an informative platform to share updates and strengthen collaborative working across the region. It was agreed that the group will continue to meet on a quarterly basis, with the Terms of Reference (TOR) shared for review and sign-off ahead of the next meeting. Discussions focused on challenges with SSNAP data inputting and reporting, alongside consideration of real-time versus quarterly reporting. It was further agreed that unresolved regional issues will be escalated to the national SSNAP team with the support of the ISDN, and that Trusts and ICBs will develop and share action plans to support improvements in SSNAP ratings.

The meeting also emphasised the importance of having representation from each site to ensure informed regional discussion and a consistent approach to SSNAP. Continued participation is essential, and Trusts are encouraged to nominate colleagues from their SSNAP stroke teams where needed to maintain engagement and momentum as the group moves forward.



RECALIBRATION OF SSNAP SCORING: KEY POINTS

The Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme (SSNAP) (www.strokeaudit.org) monitors the quality of stroke care delivery across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, providing timely data to clinicians, commissioners, patients, and the public to help drive improvements.

Following the *National Clinical Guideline for Stroke* and *NICE Stroke Rehabilitation in Adults* updates, the SSNAP dataset was revised in October 2024 to align with new evidence-based standards.

Hospitals are now assessed against 40 key indicators grouped into seven domains and scored from A to E. [Guidance on the recalculated scores can be found here](#), with further details on the updated metrics [here](#) and the [historic scoring methodology here](#).

Teams received their recalibrated scores in [June 2025](#), and the results are available.

This recalibration updates a scoring system in place for the past decade, raising thresholds to meet higher expectations and remove the previous 'ceiling effect' where many sites consistently achieved top ratings. As a result, more teams will initially appear in lower categories - not due to worsening care but due to more ambitious targets. The change is intended to provide "headroom" for continuous improvement over the next 5-10 years.

[Further details are available in a letter](#) and [presentation](#) by SSNAP Clinical Director, Professor Martin James, which are recommended for sharing within trusts and with those reviewing SSNAP reports.



PATIENT EXPERIENCE VIDEO BY HEREFORD STROKE TEAM

A short video has been made by Wye Valley NHS Trust Stroke Team which features a patient who received thrombolysis. Wye Valley Trust are currently taking part in the NHS Elect programme TASC2 (improving thrombolysis times). The stroke team and with the help of the TASC 2 team have identified a need for training and education around stroke and the importance of early treatment within the Emergency Department team.

This video features a past patient who had a stroke. She discusses her stroke journey and (despite early thrombolysis) the disabilities she is still left with today. It also highlights the importance of communication to the patient's family.

Please scan the QR code to watch this amazing video of Krissie's story. The stroke team hope the video educates staff to think, make decisions and give treatments as soon as possible and change outcomes for stroke patients. Feel free to share your feedback with us



AUGUST HIGHLIGHTS

- ⇒ The West Midlands ISDN Annual Report 2024/25 has been shared with stakeholders. The report presents the summary of the breadth and depth of work completed in 2024/25 in collaboration with our partners, and our strategic objectives for 2025/26. If you would like to receive a copy please get in touch.
- ⇒ This month's West Midlands Thrombectomy Network meeting discussed the concerns with patients seen at the back of ambulances across sites and the need to monitor at ED. There were a number of actions for the ISDN to support, and these include facilitating a regional meeting with ED clinical leads and WMAS to further discuss. In addition, the ongoing issues with the slow transfer of images with RapidAI software was raised for the ISDN to escalate and help to resolve.
- ⇒ We concluded our follow up acute site visits across the region, and met with SWBH stroke team on 20th August and UHCW strategic team on 27th August. Summary reports will be shared once finalised.
- ⇒ Our initial stroke workforce meeting took place on 4th August. Discussion focused on identifying the differences between nursing and practitioner roles on the ward, with the aim of developing a 5-10 year strategy to expand Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) roles within stroke services, and reduce the impact of a limited stroke consultant workforce. We are working on identifying workforce numbers across the region including which Trusts have established ACP roles. Findings will be shared to the group and to discuss next steps.
- ⇒ We discussed how community teams can work with their integrated neighbourhood teams to ensure stroke care is delivered alongside other community care and services. This is a great opportunity to work with local authority and primary care to ensure stroke care remains a top priority.
- ⇒ The West Midlands Regional Working Party for Psychology in Stroke met earlier this month to finalise the scoping data and where to disseminate. Watch this space for the final report!

WEST MIDLANDS HEALTH INNOVATION FUND

The West Midlands Health Innovation Fund is open for applications from 1 August to 19 September 2025. Run in partnership with South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust, Aston University and Keele University, the fund offers grants of up to £50,000 (with most awards between £10,000 and £35,000) to support the spread of innovation across the region's health and care system.

Applications are welcome from local health and care providers, academic institutions, social enterprises, voluntary organisations and eligible businesses. Projects must be fully developed, ready to implement, and focused on priorities such as reducing health inequalities, improving infrastructure, workforce productivity and integrated care.

Find out more and apply via the [West Midlands Health Innovation Fund](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

UK and ROI Acute Stroke Simulation Course Dates available from July onwards. For more information [please click here](#)
 UK Stroke Research Workshop 2025 taking place on 3rd and 4th September @ Newcastle University Medical School
SQuRe Upcoming Event Dates:
 ICSS Model Implementation Challenges and Support - Remote (via Teams) - Wednesday, 1st October | 10:00 AM -12:00 PM
 Measurement for Improvement - Remote (via Teams) - Wednesday, 3rd December | 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
 For more details on SQuRe Projects, please contact: midlands.squire@uhb.nhs.uk

IN THE NEXT EDITION

BHF Funding| September highlights| SQuRe update and much more