

WEST MIDLANDS ISDN Newsletter

December 2025 Edition



UHB ACUTE STROKE UNIT SITE VISIT

The West Midlands ISDN together with Dr Indira Natarajan, North-West Midlands ISDN Clinical Director, visited the UHB acute stroke units (ASUs) at Heartlands Hospital (BHH) and Good Hope Hospital (GHH) on 2nd December.

This was the first time such visits were undertaken, and both ASU teams welcomed the opportunity. During the discussions, we gained valuable insights into the current pathways, workforce, challenges, and recent changes at each site. Two key issues emerged:

- 1) Lack of robust stroke pathway adherence with patients being directly admitted to BHH/GHH rather than via QEJ, due to ambulance conveyance or self-presenters into ED
- 2) Boundary patients and safe robust discharge pathways for stroke rehabilitation



Our Clinical Leads provided recommendations and identified actions that the ISDN will support moving forward. We would like to extend our thanks to all colleagues who contributed to the visits. A summary report with actions for both teams, will be shared once finalised.



**University Hospitals
Birmingham**
NHS Foundation Trust

WM ICB ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

The West Midlands ISDN hosted its first ICB Engagement Event on 9th December at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham. The workshop aimed to strengthen collaboration between West Midlands ICBs, ISDN, and the Stroke Association to drive regional and local service improvements. Participants had the opportunity to share good practice, build partnerships aligned with the new clusters, and lay the foundations for collaborative working in 2026. The event also focused on clarifying strategic support between providers, ICBs, and ISDN, establishing pathways for escalating concerns, and shaping the West Midlands ISDN workplan for 2026-27.

Representatives from the ICBs and lead providers joined an informed discussion to explore the new ICB structures and clustering arrangements, alongside key themes and stroke priorities across the region. The session examined commissioning and system working, as well as pathway development, with each ICB providing updates on the current position and future plans for delivering stroke care.

The event was well received, with a clear commitment to continue working together as a Pan-Collaborative ICB group across the West Midlands ISDN. A report is being drafted, and quarterly meetings will be scheduled to maintain collaboration. Key actions agreed at the workshop include establishing stroke programme boards within each ICB with appropriate membership and governance, implementing ICSS across all areas to ensure parity in community and life after stroke services, and reviewing SSNAP data to drive quality management. We look forward to working closely with all system stakeholders to keep stroke firmly at the top of the regional agenda.



ENGAGEMENT EVENT 4TH MARCH 2026

We are excited to announce that we will be hosting a **Stroke Care Engagement Event** bringing together colleagues and stakeholders from across the region.

This event will be a fantastic opportunity to:

- Showcase the work supported by ISDN and highlight achievements in acute and rehabilitation services in the last couple of years
- Strengthen collaboration and knowledge-sharing across Trusts.
- Shape the future direction of stroke services to ensure sustainability and improved patient outcomes.
- Hear insights from the national team featuring Michelle Long, Dr Collette Marshall from regional NHSE, Juliet Bouverie and Alexis Kolodziej from the Stroke Association and Prof Indira Natarajan alongside a wealth of senior leaders driving the stroke programme

Registration is now open via link below. Please book a space now and share with interested colleagues and teams! We encourage representatives from all Trusts across our region to take part so we can work together to steer and shape the ISDN's plans for next year! We look forward to making this event a success with you!

PIONEERING STROKE SURGERY

Doctors from Scotland and the US have completed what is thought to be a world-first stroke procedure using a robot.

Prof Iris Grunwald, of the University of Dundee, performed the remote thrombectomy - the removal of blood clots after a stroke - on a human cadaver that had been donated to medical science.

The professor was at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee, while the body she was operating on while using the machine was at a university facility.

Hours later, Ricardo Hanel - a neurosurgeon in Florida - used the technology to carry out the first transatlantic surgery from his Jacksonville base on a human body in Dundee over 4,000 miles (6,400km) away.

Please click here for more [Dundee and US surgeons achieve world-first stroke surgery using robot - BBC News](#)



AND FINALLY.....



We wish all our colleagues a good festive break and a Happy New Year!
See you all in 2026!

DECEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

- ⇒ West Midlands Community SSNAP group met this month with a focus on mood pathway in Coventry. The pathway is supported by both psychologist and rehab staff. It was great to hear about the pathway and the performance being recorded in SSNAP. The group also discussed current challenges and shared examples of good practice.
- ⇒ TTASC3 was launched this month, with a webinar held on 17th December. This cohort will focus on thrombectomy rates alongside thrombolysis. All teams across the patch are encouraged to submit an EOI. This cohort will also be accepting EOIs from hub sites with discussions to include rates from both hub and spokes perspectives. **Link to apply for EOIs will be circulated on 18th December from NHS Elect.** Deadline for submission is 16th January 2026. Successful bids will be notified week commencing 2nd February 2026.
- ⇒ SQulRe portfolio of work has been celebrated. The QI achievements over the last 3 years has resulted in 22% increase in rehab improvements. A big thank you to all teams engaging with SQulRe, and for continuing to strive for stroke rehab improvement for stroke patients.
- ⇒ Thank you to all those who attended UKSF and for your feedback! UKSF continues to be a fabulous opportunity for networking, learning and sharing. Roll on UKSF 2026!
- ⇒ Stroke Association launched its powerful Christmas TV campaign. If you missed it, please watch here [Change stroke survivors' lives this Christmas \(Still Christmas film\)](#)
- ⇒ Our NWM ISDN Clinical Director, Dr Indira Natarajan and colleague are taking on a 100km challenge run in under 24 hours on Friday 19th December 6pm. They are raising money to support the rural community in Western Jamaica which has been devastated by Hurricane Melissa, many of which remain cut off from supplies and communication. If you would like to donate please click link <https://gofund.me/5545441ee>

UPCOMING EVENTS

UK and ROI Acute Stroke Simulation Course 2026 - [Please click this link for more information on registration and dates](#)
 CVDLP Lunch and Learns - 4th Feb 2026 - [Please click this link for more information](#)
 Stroke Prevention Day - 29th January 2026 [Stroke Prevention Day](#) | [Stroke Association](#)
 Rowley Regis Hospital Bedded Rehab Site Visit - 8th January 2026

IN THE NEXT EDITION

SQulRe | January highlights | PPV update and much more