

Specialist Treatment for Stroke Victims

Stroke victims who get to a Greater Manchester hospital within four hours are now guaranteed specialist treatment.

A new £2.5m network of stroke care is up and running across the region and doctors expect to treat six times more people this year – and prevent them suffering permanent disabilities.

The service, the first to be completed in the UK, is headed by a 24-hour unit at Salford Royal Hospital and two units at Stepping Hill, Stockport, and Fairfield General, Bury. Staff will use high-tech scanners to detect blood clots in the brain, which they can then break down with drugs.

Doctors hope by treating people immediately they will dramatically reduce deaths and disabilities which often follow strokes.

Currently 30 per cent of people who have a stroke die within a month, a third are left disabled and a third recover.

Dr Peter Elton, Lead Greater Manchester Director of Public Health for stroke, said: “We are dedicated to delivering the highest standards of stroke and cardiac care to all patients across Greater Manchester”.

“More than 6,000 people are affected each year by stroke in this region and this is a figure we are committed to improving by ensuring we have a leading program for prevention, treatment and after care.”

After receiving treatment at one of the three specialist centres patients are then transferred to a district stroke centre, based in their local area for further treatment and rehabilitation.

Rapid assessment and treatment

Dr Pippa Tyrrell, Honorary Consultant in Stroke Medicine at Salford Royal, said: “The key to stroke recovery is rapid assessment and treatment. The redesign of services means we can offer thrombolysis to many more people with acute stroke. We are confident that this will go a long way towards helping to reduce disability and death.

“The re-organisation we have implemented here in Greater Manchester is the first of its kind in the UK and we aim to continue to improve it by improving rehabilitation and long term care for stroke, once the acute phase of treatment is over.”

Now the specialist team are working to identify more patients with mini strokes – transient ischemic attacks (TIA's) and intervene to ensure they do not go on to suffer a full stroke.

Health professionals from across the UK will learn more about the initiative at a conference in Manchester today (May 19).

Speakers at the conference include heart and stroke Tsar Prof Roger Boyle CBE; Dr Tyrrell; and patient representatives, who shared their experiences of life after stroke.

Salford's specialist centre provides a 24-hour service, seven days a week, with the other two centres taking patients five days a week between 7am and 7pm.

Strokes are the third biggest cause of death in Britain. They cause long-term disability estimated to cost the region's economy £6bn a year.

A government TV advertising campaign highlighting classic stroke symptoms is encouraging people to go to hospital and take advantage of the new improved care.