



Introducing childhood stroke

Supporting children after a stroke

Toolkit for teachers and childcare professionals: part 1

Stroke
Association

Finding **strength** through **support**

Introducing childhood stroke

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Introduction

This toolkit is for education and childcare professionals supporting children and young people affected by stroke. These materials cover children in pre-school, primary and secondary schools, and college and further education settings.

Although stroke is often seen as a disease of older adults, several hundred children have a stroke each year in the UK.

Each child who has a stroke is different, and has different needs and challenges as a result of the stroke. This toolkit can help equip professionals around the child to include and support them in the childcare setting or classroom.

The toolkit contains information about stroke, as well as practical tools to help with communication, planning and documentation. It also signposts to additional sources of information and support for professionals and families.

How we created this toolkit

The contents of this toolkit were gathered from a range of information sources, along with the practical experiences of the Stroke Support Coordinators working within the Stroke Association/Evelina London Children's Hospital Childhood Stroke Project.

Parents and young people provided their advice and shared stories. Other contributions came from professionals working in health and educational settings with experience of stroke and acquired brain injury.

We would like to acknowledge their valuable contribution and thank them for their input.



1. How stroke affects children and young people

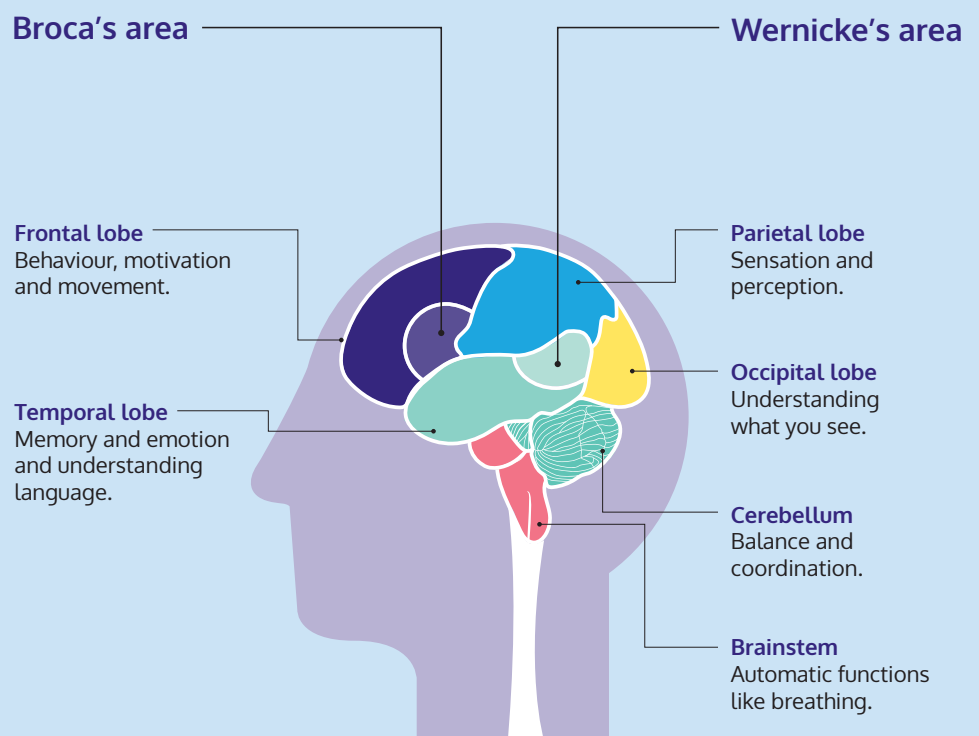
Any stroke, even if it is relatively minor, can still have a big impact on a child's learning and development. A stroke can cause difficulties with movement and balance, as well as problems with speaking, understanding, reading and writing.

After a stroke, children can have cognitive, learning or behavioural difficulties. They may also experience visual problems, pain and seizures. A child may not have a physical disability, but could still experience hidden effects such as fatigue, cognitive problems or emotional problems.

The effects of the stroke depend on:

- Where the stroke happened in the brain, and the size of the damaged area.
- Any other medical conditions a child has that can affect their recovery and energy levels.
- The age and stage of the child when they have a stroke – this can be linked to how aware they are of what happened, and how much they can use strategies to manage their difficulties. The fastest recovery happens in the first few months, but children continue to recover for months or years after a stroke.

This diagram shows the different parts of the brain, and gives an overview of the functions they are responsible for.





It is important to acknowledge that the diagram on page 4 is a static image, with functions shown in clearly distinct areas. In reality, the brain is much more dynamic. Different areas are communicating all the time and the speed and efficiency of this communication and processing can be affected by stroke. In children and young people the brain is still developing, so these areas may have not been fully established. A stroke that happens during a key period of a child's brain development can have an impact on future learning skills as well as current ability.²

In addition to the impact of the stroke itself, there are also secondary effects as a result of adjusting to a new medical condition, and coping with any changes in cognitive and physical ability.

Many children who experience a stroke adjust and cope well with any associated difficulties. But it is not uncommon for children to experience changes in psychological and emotional wellbeing and behaviour. This may be as a result of the stroke itself, but can be partly due to the way things have changed for them, such as how they spend their social,

play and friendship time.

The stroke might change the hobbies they can do, and their ability to do day-to-day things like getting dressed, preparing a snack or going out with friends.

The child's family could be affected, with family members taking on caring roles, and possible changes to working patterns and financial security. Parents and carers will also be concerned with the best way to help the young person understand what has happened. They may feel anxious about talking to family members, and giving the right information to the other people in the child's network such as teachers and childcare professionals.

There are a range of services that may be supportive to families throughout this process, some of which may come from health, and some from educational settings. This toolkit will include information about the range of professionals who should be considered the 'team around the child'.

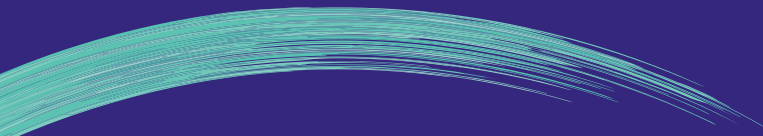
2. Therapies and services supporting a young person

After a stroke, a child is treated and supported by a team of professionals including doctors, nurses, therapists and education professionals. They are likely to begin having assessment and therapy whilst they are in a hospital setting, and this may continue after they have returned to school. They will have some outside appointments as well as having some therapies on school premises and this can mean them missing lesson time.

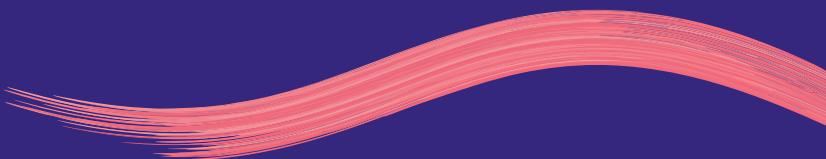
Later in this toolkit we look at ways of timetabling and working with the other professionals and parents/carers to help make sure that the child can get support for their recovery after they are back at school.

For more information about the professionals and services involved in a young person's care after a stroke, go to Training resources for professionals around the child in **Part 3**.





Stroke turns your world upside down without any warning. It may leave you feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about the future. But you're not alone. We're here to support you and your child throughout their stroke recovery.



Contact us

Our dedicated Childhood Stroke Support Team is here to help you find answers to your questions and support you with guidance, emotional support and practical information – whenever you need it.

Call: **0303 3033 100**

Email: **childhoodstroke@stroke.org.uk**

Visit: **stroke.org.uk/childhood**

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Part 1 of 4

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