

A visual tool to help stroke patients understand their care pathway

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Background

As a part of a 5 year Guy's and St. Thomas' Charity funded project, known as the Modernisation Initiative, a stroke pathway was attempted prior to the implementation of service improvement and redesign. This identified the pathway was extremely complicated and that many of the staff working within the service were not clear themselves on the stroke pathway. In 2007, following service improvements and redesign a further stroke pathway was created by clinicians involved in the project. Once this was ratified across the 4 partner organisations, it was identified by clinicians that a diagrammatic representation of the stroke pathway for service users would be helpful.

Process

A group of patients and their carers were approached to assist in the redesign of the clinicians pathway to meet their information needs, facilitated by staff from the Modernisation Initiative. It was clear that they wanted to be able to identify different parts of the pathway from hospital to community care and that they wanted some level of detail on the diagram at each point. It was important to the user group that pictures were added to ensure the pathway was aphasia friendly. The user group confirmed that the pathway was in a language and design that aided their understanding. They also raised areas for consideration such as when it would be used and asked that it would not replace conversation and other methods of information-giving.

Lessons learned

The complexity and lack of clarity in the original version of the stroke pathway would not have lent itself to a service user pathway. It was important through the project to gain clarity on the stroke pathway and close off some of the unnecessary steps and transition points. It was only once this work had been completed that a service user pathway became possible.

The involvement of a user group in identifying their information needs from a pathway were key to its development. Essential to this was expert facilitation.

Uses of the pathway

There are a number of ways that the pathway will be used:

- as an additional page into the existing Stroke Patient Handbook
- as leaflets and posters according to local teams' needs
- as a web based resource

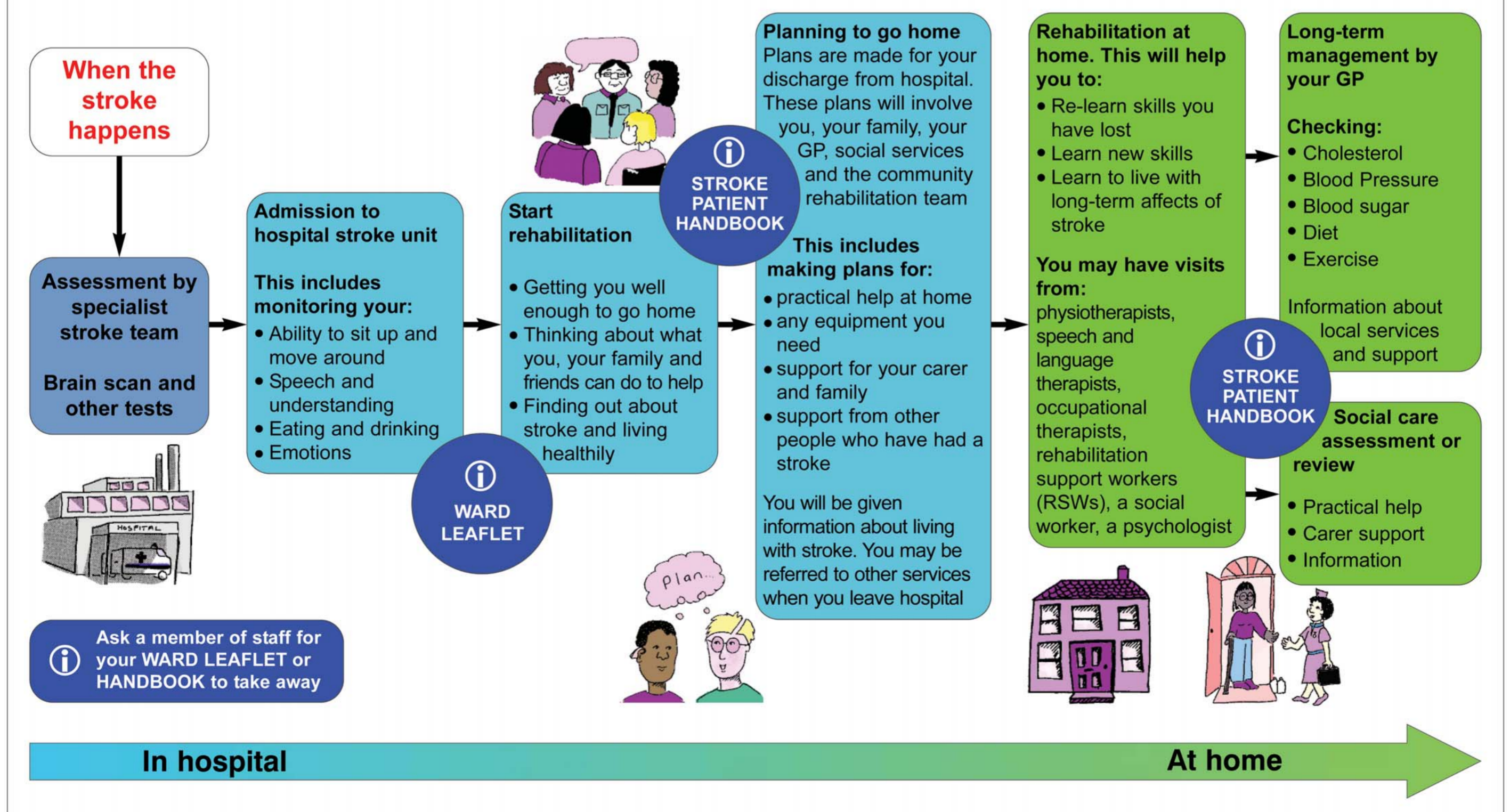
It is envisaged that the pathway can be used by individual clinicians during discussions with the patients and their carers to aid clarification of the pathway both in the acute and in the community setting. It will also be helpful to aid clarification of the pathway for staff or students new to involvement in stroke.

Summary

The development of a patient version of a stroke pathway was only possible once clarification of the clinicians' pathway was achieved with all of the partner organisations. The involvement of a user group to develop the patient version was key in producing a document which meets the information needs of the stroke patients and their carers and highlights areas where there are specific areas of concern. We are now able to use a service user developed version of the stroke pathway across acute and community sectors.

Stroke Pathway

This is to help you understand what will happen to you after you have had a stroke. It also tells you what kind of support you can get, depending on your needs.



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