

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Supporting Stroke Survivors in Roscommon

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Introduction: A stroke can have devastating effects for the person themselves and their families and means adjusting their lives. Stroke support groups offer stroke survivors and their caregivers/families a chance to share concerns and support each other in a positive environment as they adjust to changes in their lives. Currently in Ireland, there are over 30,000 stroke survivors with annual prevalence of stroke estimated to be approximately 10,000 (IHF 2014). Roscommon is a small rural county in the west of Ireland with population of over 64,000. Here, the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) in Stroke and the Senior Speech and Language Therapist (SLT), identified that there was a significant need for a stroke support group (SSG). The IHF (2014) had also identified a gap in the presence of stroke support groups in many regions of Ireland, particularly rural Ireland.

Practice Change Implemented: A working group was formulated to establish a SSG in Roscommon, which included; CNS in stroke, Senior SLT, IHF, Consultant Geriatrician, Public Health Nurse, Clinical Nurse Manager from local rehabilitation facility and Occupational Therapist from Quest Brain Injury Services. This group was a combination of acute, rehabilitation and primary care professionals, HSE and voluntary bodies, all working together with the ultimate aim of establishing a SSG for the people of Roscommon and the surrounding area. The IHF committed to employing a SSG co-ordinator to run the group. All members working with stroke survivors, sought consent for their name and contact details to be added to a database. Everyone on this database received correspondence regarding the SSG. A public meeting to launch the SSG was held. A SSG co-ordinator was recruited. The SSG meet on a weekly basis.

Aim & Theory of Change: The SSG aims to provide stroke survivors and their families with peer and social support, enabling them to feel more empowered to live meaningful lives after their stroke.

Targeted Population & Stakeholders: The target population is stroke survivors in Roscommon and the surrounding area. The key stakeholders are stroke survivors, their families, IHF and the professionals involved in the SSG.

Timeline: The initial meeting with Senior SLT, stroke CNS and the IHF took place in May 2016, with the working group formed in June 2016. A public meeting was held in September 2016 with the first SSG meeting taking place in October 2016.

Highlights: The SSG runs weekly with positive outcomes including; a sense of belonging, improved social support and interaction, education and information, and increased confidence. The SSG is also seen as a link for help.

Comments on sustainability: The SSG meets on a weekly basis and the sustainability of this is possible due to the commitment of the IHF in providing a SSG co-ordinator.

Comments on transferability: The Roscommon SSG is the first to be established by the IHF in rural Ireland, however in 2017 at least eight additional SSGs will be established throughout Ireland. This is in addition to the existing 20 SSGs that are in operation, including ten SSGs that are part of the IHF network.

Keywords: stroke; survivor; support; group
