

Chief Executive
Direct Line:
E-mail:
Reference:

To: Chief Executives of Hospital Trusts that Provide Acute Stroke Services
(Cumbria and Lancashire):

Southport and Ormskirk
Blackpool
East Lancs
UHMBT
Lancashire Teaching
Blackburn

6 August 2010

Dear Colleague

RE: Cumbria and Lancashire Telestroke Service

As you are aware one of the major opportunities for improving the quality and reducing the cost of patient care is to accelerate our improvement in the diagnosis and treatment of Stroke in the North West. At the recent CEO meeting in July, highlighted the local opportunities and it was clear that further work was required to improve our services in line with national standards.

The Cumbria and Lancashire Cardiac and Stroke Network, in association with NHS North West, has developed a project (supported by NHS North West Innovation funds) to deliver a Telestroke solution that will deliver out of hours assessment and thrombolysis. The provider organisation which is leading this exciting development is North Cumbria University Hospitals.

You will be aware that the best practice tariff has now been implemented for stroke and for providers to receive this, one of the elements they will need to deliver is a hyper-acute stroke service that provides 24 hour and 7 day access to brain imaging, expert interpretation and the opinion of a consultant stroke specialist (using telemedicine where appropriate) to support thrombolysis of appropriate patients.

The impact on both short and long term outcomes is substantial for those patients who require and are given thrombolysis within a 3 hour period from onset. Clearly, providing access to a stroke specialist on a 24/7 basis in all acute hospitals is not practical or affordable, however, we can be innovative and provide this level of care if we work collaboratively across our stroke units. The Cumbria and Lancashire Telestroke project will support joint working between our stroke teams and will help us achieve the national standards and best practice requirements.

The project was agreed at the Cumbria and Lancashire Collaborative Working Board and at the Cardiac and Stroke Networks Board in September 2009. Many of you will have attended the on-site Telestroke demonstrations which have generated tremendous enthusiasm within the clinical and managerial teams.

The project is progressing rapidly and is now entering the phase of the project where telemedicine equipment will be procured. In addition to this, the project needs to start to develop the overall governance and workforce frameworks for delivering the out of hours aspect of 24/7 assessment and thrombolysis .

In order to further progress the project, each organisation that provides acute stroke services in the Cumbria and Lancashire now needs to formally commit to participating in the project as this will directly impact on the equipment procurement.

We would therefore be grateful if you could confirm your organisation's participation in writing to _____, Chief Executive, North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust (with a copy to _____ Acting Director of the Cardiac and Stroke Networks in Lancashire and Cumbria) by Friday 13th August 2010.

We have attached an overview of the project. If you require any further information please contact _____, Divisional General Manager for Medicine at North Cumbria University Hospitals directly on _____ email _____ or _____ . Email:

Yours sincerely

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
NHS NORTHWEST**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
NCUH**

Enc

cc: Cumbria Lancashire Cardiac and Stroke Network Board and Stroke Telemedicine Project Board