

# Evaluating Post-Stroke Communication Screening Practices at Northern Health Against Stroke Foundation Guidelines

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**RESEARCH WEEK**  
**19-22 OCTOBER 2026**  
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## Northern Health

### Background

Post-stroke communication deficits are common, affecting up to 64% of stroke survivors during the acute phase<sup>1</sup>. The Stroke Foundation's *Clinical Guidelines for Stroke Management* recommend that "all stroke survivors should be screened for communication deficits using a screening tool that is valid and reliable"<sup>2</sup>. Currently there is no established method to monitor or evaluate how well current communication screening practices at Northern Health align with the Stroke Foundation Guidelines.

### Aims

To evaluate if people admitted to Northern Hospital Epping are being screened for communication deficits in line with Stroke Foundation Guidelines.

#### This project will:

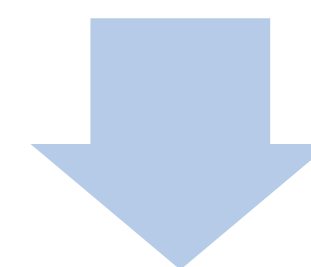
- Determine what percentage of patients with new stroke received a communication screen between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025
- Identify which screening or assessment tools were being used and how often
- Compare current practices with the Stroke Foundation Guidelines
- Explore variables contributing to completion or noncompletion of communication screening

### Method

A retrospective clinical audit is being conducted on stroke patients admitted to Northern Hospital Epping between 1 January and 31 December 2025, conducted in two phases.

#### Phase 1

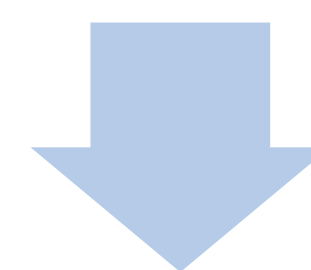
Data were requested from Northern Health's data warehouse to identify patients with new stroke diagnoses during the audit period.



#### Phase 2

An audit of medical files of the patients identified in Phase 1 will:

- determine screening completion rates
- identify communication screening tools used
- explore potential factors influencing screening



Demographic and audit data will be summarised using descriptive statistics. Exploratory analyses will be conducted using multivariable logistic regression models.

### Results

Preliminary demographic analysis identified 568 admissions with a new stroke diagnosis during the audit period.

| Characteristic          | Result                                                                                |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Total stroke admissions | 568                                                                                   |
| Female                  | 46.48% (n = 264)                                                                      |
| Male                    | 53.52% (n= 304)                                                                       |
| Mean age (SD)           | 71.5 years (SD = 14.67)                                                               |
| Primary language spoken | English 68.13%<br>Italian 4.93%<br>Other* 26.94%<br>*includes 28 additional languages |
| Audit of medical files  | Ongoing                                                                               |

### Conclusion

The demographic profile of this cohort appeared broadly consistent with that reported in the Stroke Foundation National Stroke Audit<sup>3</sup>. Completion of file audits will enable evaluation of adherence to Stroke Foundation recommendations for communication screening and identification of opportunities for service improvement.

#### References

1. Mitchell, C., Gittins, M., Tyson, S., Vail, A., Conroy, P., Paley, L., & Bowen, A. (2021). *Prevalence of aphasia and dysarthria among inpatient stroke survivors: Describing the population, therapy provision and outcomes on discharge*. *Aphasiology*, 35(7), 950–960. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02687038.2020.1759772>
2. Stroke Foundation. (n.d.). *Australian and New Zealand living clinical guidelines for stroke management: Chapter 5 – Rehabilitation*. Retrieved May 27, 2026, from <https://informme.org.au/guidelines/living-clinical-guidelines-for-stroke-management>
3. Stroke Foundation. (2023). *National Stroke Audit Acute Services Report 2023*. <https://informme.org.au/stroke-data/Acute-audits>