

# Working together to help reduce stroke risk



# Overview summary

The Yorkshire & Humber Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) has linked with [Healthwatch Kirklees](#) to identify people who may have Atrial Fibrillation (AF), which puts them at an increased risk of a stroke, and signpost them to appropriate services.

AF is an irregular and often fast heart rhythm. It is the most common type of heart rhythm disturbance and affects around one million people

in the United Kingdom with around an additional estimated 422,600 people going undiagnosed. AF is also responsible for approximately 20 per cent of all strokes. Survivors must live with the devastating consequences and treating the condition costs the NHS over £2.2 billion each year. The tragedy for these patients is that many of these strokes could be avoided through effective detection and protection with anticoagulant drugs.

Joint working by the Yorkshire & Humber AHSN and Healthwatch Kirklees is:

- helping Healthwatch Kirklees to engage with people as they gather views on health and social care services in Kirklees
- supporting the AHSN Network's ambition to identify potential AF patients. Effective detection and protection with anticoagulant drugs could help avoid 7,000 AF related strokes and 2,000 premature deaths in England.





# Challenge/problem identified

Many strokes associated with AF can be avoided. Each AF related stroke has life changing consequences for victims. We have estimated that there are over 38,000 people in Yorkshire and Humber who have AF but are not on their GP's AF register. In Kirklees it is estimated that there are around **2,800 people with undetected AF**.

Of the 111,074 people in our region who are known to have AF, 16,580 are statistically at high risk of stroke and are not being adequately protected because they are not being prescribed suitable medication.



As a consequence of this, we estimate there are 1,312 avoidable strokes per year across Yorkshire. In addition to the obvious benefits for patients, the effective management of AF could result in a **£124m per year saving** across England as a result of avoided strokes. Reducing the NHS deficit and avoiding unplanned care and mortality are key components of NHS England's [Five Year Forward View](#).



# Actions taken

Reducing the number of AF related strokes is a [priority programme](#) for the AHSN Network. The Yorkshire & Humber AHSN aims to improve diagnosis and management of AF through a quality improvement programme that includes providing a simple, innovative

Electrocardiogram (ECG) device to aid identification of potential AF cases.

Already rolled out in more than **43 GP practices** in the region covering a population of **373,000 patients**, the Yorkshire & Humber AHSN has now made the ECG devices available to the Healthwatch Kirklees public engagement team.

The Yorkshire & Humber AHSN provided training for the team, who are not healthcare professionals, and created information and sign-posting resources for members of the public who took the test.

The AHSN also linked the Healthwatch team to the British Heart Foundation, which provided information on AF and the importance of early identification of the condition, its impact on health and wellbeing and the type of treatments required to manage it.



6



7



# Impacts/outcomes

Healthwatch Kirklees uses free health checks to attract members of the public to take part in conversations and feedback about their experiences within the health and social care system.

Following a training programme delivered by the Yorkshire & Humber AHSN, the Healthwatch Kirklees team is now using the digital devices, linked to smartphones, to provide AF checks as part of their public engagement work.

These have previously been focused on Body Mass Index tests, which have proven to be really popular.

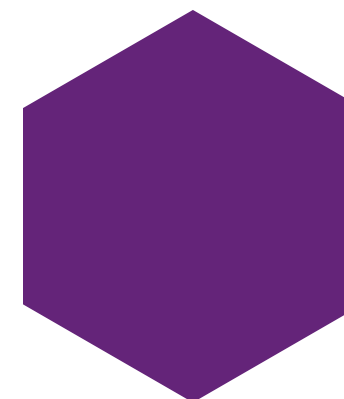
They have used the devices on information stands in a number of community settings for example:

- Sports and leisure centres
- Huddersfield Town Football Stadium
- A support group for parents with children with additional needs
- A support group for people with Parkinson's Disease

To date more than **300 tests** have been carried out with **43 people** recommended to visit their GP for further diagnosis and treatment.



8



9



# Plans for the future

The team is now planning a further series of outreach sessions where the tests will be offered. Venues include:

- Local supermarkets
- Libraries
- Bus stations
- Leisure centres
- Bingo halls
- Play centres
- Belly dancing classes
- Asian ladies' coffee mornings
- Carers events at two Town Halls
- Older people's centres
- Local workplaces including Royal Mail, a card factory and the council's refuse collecting team
- A support group of people with Parkinson's Disease and their families

