**97% of stroke patients now monitoring their own blood pressure with support of new Sláintecare funded Mater Hospital StrokeLINK service**

1 in 5 Irish people will suffer a Stroke at some point in their lives, and the results can be life changing to the patient and their families. StrokeLINK, a new Sláintecare funded service, run by the Mater Hospital is supporting Stroke patients in Dublin North City and County to help them manage their condition. Routine self-monitoring of blood pressure has increased from 58% before StrokeLINK to 97% with the support of StrokeLINK, which is an increase of 67%*.* This is helping them stay healthier at home for longer, and avoid hospital visits and stays.

StrokeLINK specialist stroke nurses connect with patients before they leave hospital, and stay in touch post-discharge, both in-person and over the phone. Thanks to this specialised, one-to-one care patients are seeing remarkable results:

* 95% reduced their alcohol intake compared with 51% before StrokeLINK
* 67% stopped smoking compared with 14% before StrokeLINK
* 93% of patients reported making healthier dietary choices compared with 42% before StrokeLINK.

StrokeLINK patients receive direct care from the StrokeLINK nurses before they leave the hospital, and are guided through the discharge process. The nurse then follows up with the patient 48 hours post discharge and at regular intervals between then and the routinely scheduled three month medical clinic check up. The nurses are also available as a point of contact to respond to issues as they arise.

During its first few months of operation StrokeLINK has supported 140+ patients to manage their condition, and patients are delighted with the service. Patricia, a StrokeLINK patient says: *“To have had that experience, and think will this happen again, what should I do, what should I not do…all my questions were answered clearly. They were very reassuring*”.

Patients and their families and / or carers also receive a book that helps them understand their stroke and to encourage them to do the things that will speed their recovery and keep them well. The stroke nurses introduce the book while patients are in hospital and use it during phone calls and home visits.

Lauren McDunphy is a specialist stroke nurse working on StrokeLINK, she says: “*Text messages and email reminders, a contact phone number for a StrokeLINK nurse, and liaison between StrokeLINK nurse and GP/Public Health Nurse/Primary care team all help patients to feel confident in managing their condition, and to stay as well as they can at home and in their community. We have seen amazing results so far:*

* *100% of StrokeLINK patients had linked in with their GP in the weeks following their stroke compared with 68% before StrokeLINK,*
* *98% of patients rated their discharge-related care as excellent compared with 63% before StrokeLINK”.*

**Other positive results coming through from the new service include:**

* 89% said they knew what danger signals to watch for after they got home compared with 28% before StrokeLINK
* 96% felt they received enough information to help them manage their condition when they got home compared with 70% before StrokeLINK
* 94% said they knew who to contact if they were worried about their condition or treatment after they left hospital compared with 48% before StrokeLINK

Consultant Neurologist Dr. Michael Marnane says:“*40% of people will be readmitted to hospital within two years of their first stroke. StrokeLINK can help prevent many of these admissions by giving people the tools they need to change their lifestyle, and to engage with the advice they’ve been given in hospital. The clinical care model and engaging tools developed for StrokeLINK have huge potential to be adapted for other chronic disease management contexts (e.g. heart disease, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, diabetes mellitus, chronic lung disease, etc).”*

The team at the Mater worked with designers at the National College of Art and Design to make patient information clear and accessible. Before StrokeLINK, despite the best efforts of the team, Stroke patients often seemed unsure what to do to take care of themselves. “*This is really common in healthcare – clinical staff do their best but patients often feel overwhelmed with information or completely lost and powerless. The National College of Art and Design interaction designers really helped us crack this – to deeply understand what patients need and co-design a service and tools that really work for them*” says Dr. Marnane.

NOTES:

The initial development of the StrokeLINK programme was funded via the Sláintecare Integration Fund. Additional funding was subsequently secured through a Public Service Innovation Award and from Spark Innovation to continue to grow the depth and quality of educational and empowerment tools available to patients, carers and healthcare workers via StrokeLINK.

The project was a finalist in the HSE Service Excellence Awards 2021 as well as the Institute of Designers of Ireland Awards 2021. It was also a recipient of a Mater Hospital Institutional award which acknowledged the innovative and high quality care provided to StrokeLINK patients.

The Mater Clinical Stroke team, Mater Transformation and NCAD Interaction Design teams led on the development of StrokeLINK and are currently working with key local and national stakeholders to explore how the success of StrokeLINK can be harnessed to provide better care to those in need across Ireland.