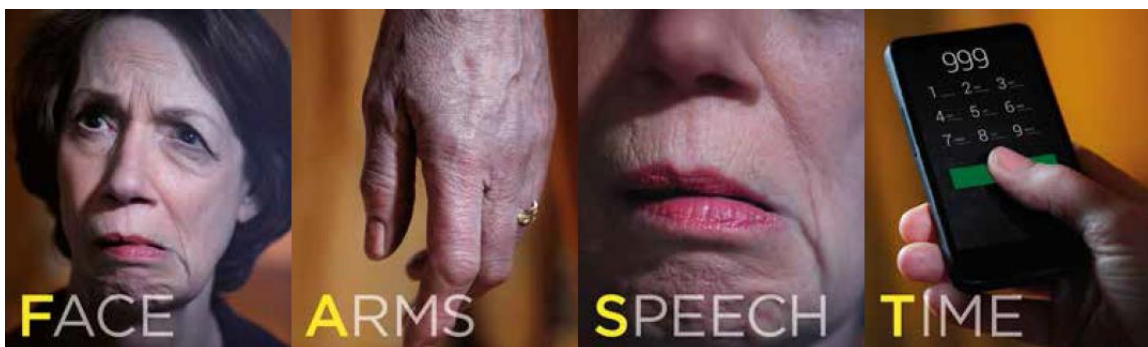


ACT F.A.S.T.

Campaign toolkit

February 2023



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1. CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

On 13 February 2023, NHS England, in association with the [Stroke Association](#), will relaunch the Act F.A.S.T. stroke campaign, which highlights that a stroke is a medical emergency and urges the public to call 999 immediately if they notice any single one of the signs of a stroke in themselves or others.

The primary audience for the campaign is people aged 50+, as this age group are more likely to experience a stroke. The campaign is also relevant to a wider all adult audience of ‘stroke savers’ who may witness somebody showing one of the stroke signs, be it a loved one or a friend.

The aim of the campaign is to reduce the amount of time between someone having a stroke and arriving at hospital (and therefore receiving appropriate care including thrombolysis or thrombectomy, if appropriate) by:

- 1) Increasing knowledge of the signs of a stroke
- 2) Increasing knowledge of stroke as a medical emergency; and
- 3) Increasing intention to act quickly on the signs of a stroke by calling 999

The campaign has run for more than ten years and the F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) acronym is effective in driving calls to 999 for stroke, saving lives and reducing disability.¹ It also provides a simple test to help people identify the most common signs of a stroke:

Think and Act F.A.S.T. if you see any single one of these signs of a stroke:

- **Face** – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- **Arms** – can they raise both arms and keep them there?
- **Speech** – is their speech slurred?
- **Time** – even if you’re not sure, call 999.

When Stroke Strikes Act F.A.S.T. Call 999

¹ Kantar Public, 2018: Pre and Post Campaign Tracking and Jel Thinking 2019 econometric modelling of the impact of the campaign.

The campaign runs from 13 February until 31 March and includes TV, video on demand, radio, social media, partnerships and multi-cultural activity. PR activity supporting the campaign will begin in March following the launch of advertising in February.

The web page for the campaign is www.nhs.uk/ActFAST

2. KEY MESSAGES

Below are the key campaign messages which help raise awareness of the main signs of stroke and encourage people who notice any one of the signs to call 999, thus highlighting the importance of seeking medical assistance as a matter of urgency.

PRIMARY MESSAGES

- Call 999 when you notice any single one of the signs of stroke.
- Stroke is a medical emergency.

Think and Act F.A.S.T. if you see any single one of these signs of a stroke:

- **Face** – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- **Arms** – can they raise both arms and keep them there?
- **Speech** – is their speech slurred?
- **Time** – even if you're not sure, call 999.

When Stroke Strikes Act F.A.S.T. Call 999

SECONDARY MESSAGES

Some other signs that may be due to a stroke or mini stroke include:

- Sudden loss of vision or blurred vision in one or both eyes
- Sudden weakness or numbness on one side of your body (including in your leg)

- Sudden memory loss or confusion
- Sudden dizziness, unsteadiness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the other signs
- Call 999 immediately if you notice any single one of the signs of stroke.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit www.nhs.uk/ActFAST for more information.

3. FACTS AND STATS

- Stroke is the fourth single leading cause of death in the UK and the single largest cause of complex disability.²
- The estimated aggregate societal cost of stroke is £26 billion per year, including £8.6 billion for NHS and social care.³
- Around 100,000 people have strokes each year in the UK. This is around one stroke every five minutes.⁴
- Stroke also disproportionately affects some groups, with black people being twice as likely to have a stroke than white people.⁵ On average, people of Black African, Black Caribbean and South Asian descent in the UK have strokes when they are younger.⁶
- Prompt recognition of symptoms ensures that people having a stroke can get emergency treatment earlier giving them the best chance of survival and recovery.⁷

² NHS 2019: The NHS Long Term Plan <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>

³ [Estimated societal costs of stroke in the UK based on a discrete event simulation | Age and Ageing | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)

⁴ [Stroke statistics | Stroke Association](#)

⁵ Sewell et al (2021) Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf

⁶ Sproston, K.a.M.J., Health Survey for England 2004: The Health of Minority Ethnic Groups 2006 (footnote 56) [Ethnic disparities in the major causes of mortality and their risk factors – a rapid review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ [Effect of treatment delay, age, and stroke severity on the effects of intravenous thrombolysis with alteplase for acute ischaemic stroke: a meta-analysis of individual patient data from randomised trials - The Lancet](#)

4. SOCIAL MEDIA

Please help us get the message out there by using your social media channels from 13 February to support the campaign.

Social media assets and messaging are on the [Campaign Resource Centre](#) from 13 February.

5. MEDIA ACTIVITY

The PR activity in support of the campaign is set to launch on 9 March. This will be case study led featuring stroke survivors alongside the people who saved them (stroke savers) by recognising the Act F.A.S.T. signs and calling 999.

Assets including the press release, photography, case study comments and messaging for websites, e-bulletins and newsletters will be made available by the end of February.

6. COPY TO USE IN MATERIALS

Please find below some examples of copy that you could use when communicating with your audiences about this year's Act F.A.S.T stroke campaign. This can be used across a range of channels, for example websites, e-bulletins, and newsletters.

If you wish to support the campaign as a partner please visit the [Campaign Resource Centre](#) for assets that can help you or if you have any further questions please contact: england.campaigns@nhs.net

Long-form copy

Act F.A.S.T. Call 999 if you see any single one of the signs of a stroke.

There are around 100,000 strokes in England, Scotland and Wales every year,⁸ with around 33,000 stroke related deaths each year,⁹ as well as being a leading cause of disability¹⁰.

The F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) acronym provides a memorable way of identifying the most common signs of a stroke and emphasises the importance of acting quickly by calling 999.

Think and Act F.A.S.T. if you see any single one of these signs of a stroke:

- **Face** – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- **Arms** – can they raise both arms and keep them there?
- **Speech** – is their speech slurred?
- **Time** – even if you're not sure, call 999.

When Stroke Strikes Act F.A.S.T. Call 999

A stroke is known as a 'brain attack'. It is a medical emergency that requires immediate attention as every minute is vital. That is why calling 999 is so crucial. Early recognition of symptoms can give stroke patients those extra precious minutes, enabling faster access to specialist treatment.

Whether it is a friend, loved one or even a stranger, dialing 999 quickly and acting F.A.S.T saves lives and gives stroke patients their best chance to access emergency procedures and to have recovery which could reduce the long-term effects such as a disability.

Short copy

⁸ Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme (SSNAP) CCG Outcomes Indicator Set (OIS) England and Wales April-March 2020/21 [SSNAP - Home \(strokeaudit.org\)](https://www.strokeaudit.org) and Cerebrovascular Disease and Stroke Incidence Scotland 2021/22 [Public Health Scotland](https://www.healthscotland.com)

⁹ ONS Sheet 10a: Leading causes of death by sex and age group, England and Wales, registered 2021 [Home - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk) and National Records of Scotland (NRS) - Deaths and Population Cerebrovascular Disease Table 2a: Trends in mortality 2021 [Public Health Scotland](https://www.healthscotland.com)

¹⁰ [Is stroke the most common cause of disability? - Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Diseases \(strokejournal.org\)](https://www.strokejournal.org)

Act F.A.S.T. Call 999 if you see any single one of the signs of a stroke.

The **Act F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time)** acronym provides a memorable way of identifying the most common signs of a stroke and emphasises the importance of acting quickly by calling 999.

Think and Act F.A.S.T. if you see any single one of these signs of a stroke:

- **Face** – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- **Arms** – can they raise both arms and keep them there?
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A stroke is known as a 'brain attack'. It is a medical emergency that requires immediate attention as every minute is vital. That is why calling 999 is so crucial. Early recognition of symptoms can give stroke patients those extra precious minutes, enabling faster access to specialist treatment and increasing the chances of a recovery which could reduce the long-term effects, such as a disability.

Multicultural copy

Act F.A.S.T. Call 999 if you see any single one of the signs of a stroke.

The '**Act F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time)**' acronym highlights the key signs of stroke and emphasises the importance of acting quickly by calling 999.

Think and Act F.A.S.T. if you see any single one of these signs of a stroke:

- **Face** – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- **Arms** – can they raise both arms and keep them there?
- **Speech** – is their speech slurred?
- **Time** – even if you're not sure, call 999.

When Stroke Strikes Act F.A.S.T. Call 999

There are around 100,000 strokes in England, Scotland and Wales every year¹¹, with around 33,000 stroke related deaths each year,¹² as well as being a leading cause of disability¹³. Black people are twice as likely to have a stroke than white people, on average, people of black African, black Caribbean and South Asian descent in the UK have strokes at a younger age.¹⁴ It is a medical emergency that requires immediate attention as every minute is vital. That is why calling 999 is so crucial. Early recognition of symptoms can give stroke patients those extra precious minutes, enabling faster access to specialist treatment and increasing the chances of a recovery which could reduce the long-term effects, such as a disability.

7. MULTICULTURAL ACTIVITY

Black people are almost twice as likely to have a stroke than white people¹⁵, and on average, people of black African, black Caribbean and South Asian descent in the UK have strokes earlier on in their lives.¹⁶

High blood pressure, diabetes and sickle cell are significant risk factors that can contribute to increasing the likelihood of having a stroke, and there is a high prevalence of these diseases in Black and South Asian communities. In addition to this, there are often cultural, religious and language barriers preventing these groups from seeking medical advice early.

During the campaign there will be targeted PR activity for these audiences that will include films featuring actors Chizzy Akudolu and Bhasker Patel talking through the F.A.S.T acronym and highlighting the importance of acting FAST. Alongside this there are posters featuring ethnic minority stroke survivors Charles Bosah and

¹¹ Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme (SSNAP) CCG Outcomes Indicator Set (OIS) England and Wales April-March 2020/21 [SSNAP - Home \(strokeaudit.org\)](#) and Cerebrovascular Disease and Stroke Incidence Scotland 2021/22 [Public Health Scotland](#)

¹² ONS Sheet 10a: Leading causes of death by sex and age group, England and Wales, registered 2021 [Home - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) and National Records of Scotland (NRS) - Deaths and Population Cerebrovascular Disease Table 2a: Trends in mortality 2021 [Public Health Scotland](#)

¹³ [Is stroke the most common cause of disability? - Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Diseases \(strokejournal.org\)](#)

¹⁴ Sproston, K.a.M.J., Health Survey for England 2004: The Health of Minority Ethnic Groups 2006 (footnote 56) [Ethnic disparities in the major causes of mortality and their risk factors – a rapid review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁵ Sewell et al (2021) Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf

¹⁶ Sproston, K.a.M.J., Health Survey for England 2004: The Health of Minority Ethnic Groups 2006 (footnote 56) [Ethnic disparities in the major causes of mortality and their risk factors – a rapid review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Jaswant Naker, highlighting the key signs of stroke. These will be available on the [Campaign Resource Centre](#).

Tailored PR films and radio ads will be played out across key national Black and Asian TV channels and radio stations. This will be supported by targeted PR activity involving Black and Asian spokespeople including healthcare professionals, talent and stroke survivors, who will participate in media interviews/discussions to raise awareness of the importance of calling 999 immediately if you notice any one of the signs of a stroke in yourself or others.

8. ACCESSIBILITY ACTIVITY

Disabled people, particularly those with a visual, hearing or learning disability, make up a proportion of the target audience of the Act FAST campaign. Therefore, tailored accessible campaign communications are available in alternative formats, such as audio, large print, BSL and easy read. These will be available on the [Campaign Resource Centre](#). A campaign leaflet will also be available in Braille and can be ordered for delivery via the [Campaign Resource Centre](#).

In order to talk directly to people at risk of stroke and raise awareness of the signs to look out for we engage and partner with a number of organisations and media. These focus on disabled and older people and those with long-term health conditions such as diabetes and their carers.

9. Q&A

I. What are the aims of the campaign?

- The aim of the campaign is to reduce the amount of time between someone having a stroke and arriving at hospital (and therefore receiving appropriate care including thrombolysis or thrombectomy, if appropriate) by:
 - Raising awareness of the signs and symptoms of a stroke
 - Raising awareness of stroke as a medical emergency

- Raising awareness that you should call 999 even if you are not sure that someone is having a stroke
- Increasing stroke patients presenting rapidly at A&E

II. What are the main signs of stroke?

The F.A.S.T. (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) acronym has featured in the advertising for a number of years and is a simple test to help people identify the most common signs of a stroke:

Think and Act F.A.S.T. if you see any single one of these signs of a stroke:

- **Face** - has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- **Arms** – can they raise both arms and keep them there?
- **Speech** – is their speech slurred?
- **Time** – even if you're not sure, call 999.

When Stroke Strikes Act F.A.S.T. Call 999

III. Are there any other signs to be aware of?

There are some other signs that people should be aware of as these may occasionally be due to stroke. These include:

- Sudden loss of vision or blurred vision in one or both eyes
- Sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the body
- Sudden memory loss or confusion
- Sudden dizziness, unsteadiness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the other signs

IV. Why are we running the Act FAST campaign now?

The Act FAST campaign has run for over 10 years and is one of the most successful health awareness campaigns. Increased awareness of the FAST acronym has been shown to lead to patients seeking prompt help for stroke symptoms, enabling more to be eligible for lifesaving treatments and reducing disability following their stroke.

- Awareness of the mnemonic has dropped by 12ppt since the end of the last campaign, and knowledge that you should call immediately when experiencing any one of the signs has dropped by 10ppt. It's important to maintain public awareness of the importance of acting FAST.¹⁷

V. Who are the target audiences?

- At-risk groups: 50+ C2DE, Black African, Black Caribbean, South Asian
 - *need to equip audience with knowledge to call 999 if they experience any 1 of the 3 key signs*
 - *addressing health inequalities*
- Stroke savers: the people making the 999 call. ESCORTT data shows that the caller is more likely to be female (68%), the callers age can range from 24-83 and that 82% were a relative/friend of the victim.¹⁸
 - *need to know what to look out for in order to take the appropriate action*

VI. Why are people from ethnic minority groups a specific target audience for the campaign?

Stroke is an inequalities issue, with black people twice as likely to have a stroke than white people. On average, people of Black African, Black Caribbean and South Asian descent in the UK have strokes at a younger age than white people.

¹⁷ [stroke-service-model-may-2021.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

¹⁸ [Emergency Stroke Calls: Obtaining Rapid Telephone Triage \(ESCORTT\) – a programme of research to facilitate recognition of stroke by emergency medical dispatchers - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#)