

Platform

Importance of self management is enormous, writes Angela MacLeod

TODAY marks Scotland's first Self Management Week (4-8 October 2010). The aim of Self Management Week is to raise awareness of how self management can support and improve the lives of the two million people living with long term conditions in Scotland.

As the name suggests, self management forms part of general self care and involves helping people with long term health conditions and impairments to improve their knowledge, confidence, skills and capacity to help them manage their condition and/or the consequences of their condition to improve their well being and quality of life.

A long term condition such as a brain attack (or stroke) can dramatically change the lives of stroke survivors by affecting the way they move, speak, think, see or hear. Many of these difficulties will lead to depression, loss of relationships, unemployment and money worries. With about 110,000 stroke survivors in Scotland, 50 per cent of whom will have significant impairments, the importance of self management cannot be understated.

There is now growing evidence that self management training and support for stroke survivors can be effective in helping them to adjust and improve their quality of life.

In 2008, The Long Term Conditions Alliance Scotland and the Scottish Government launched a Self Management Strategy. In this, the Scottish Government aims to embed self management in a systematic way across the whole country, and in partnership with the third sector and local authorities.

Both The Stroke Association in Scotland and Thistle Foundation have been exploring how to support stroke survivors living with communication and cognitive difficulties to be included and benefit from the self management programmes.

Over the next two decades the proportion of people with long term conditions will rise significantly. As a result, self management is going to be of great importance to people's quality of life in Scotland.

● *Angela MacLeod is Communications Manager of The Stroke Association*