

Your Health

 Health Partners

MAY 2025 NEWSLETTER



**DIGITAL
ACCESSIBILITY**

**& WORKPLACE
MENTAL HEALTH**

Plus how hypertension can lead to stroke

In this issue of **Your Health**, we celebrate the progress in digital accessibility for Global Accessibility Awareness Day, highlighting tech innovations that enhance inclusivity. For Mental Health Awareness Week, we explore the power of community in supporting workplace mental health, and for Stroke Awareness Month, we discuss the link between hypertension and stroke, offering advice on managing risks.

Global Accessibility Awareness Day

CELEBRATING ADVANCES IN DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

In today's world, technology is a big part of our daily lives. This makes digital accessibility, the practice of designing digital content and technology that is accessible for everyone, very important. Digital accessibility is a key part of making sure everyone has a fair chance to use and enjoy technology.

Over the past year there has been a wave of innovation and heightened awareness over digital accessibility – from more intelligent screen readers to user-friendly design interfaces. A lot of this progress is due to broader technological improvements, including significant contributions from artificial intelligence (AI).

In this article, we're celebrating the progress that has made digital technology more accessible to everyone, no matter their abilities.

Digital accessibility is a key part of making sure everyone has a fair chance to use and enjoy technology.



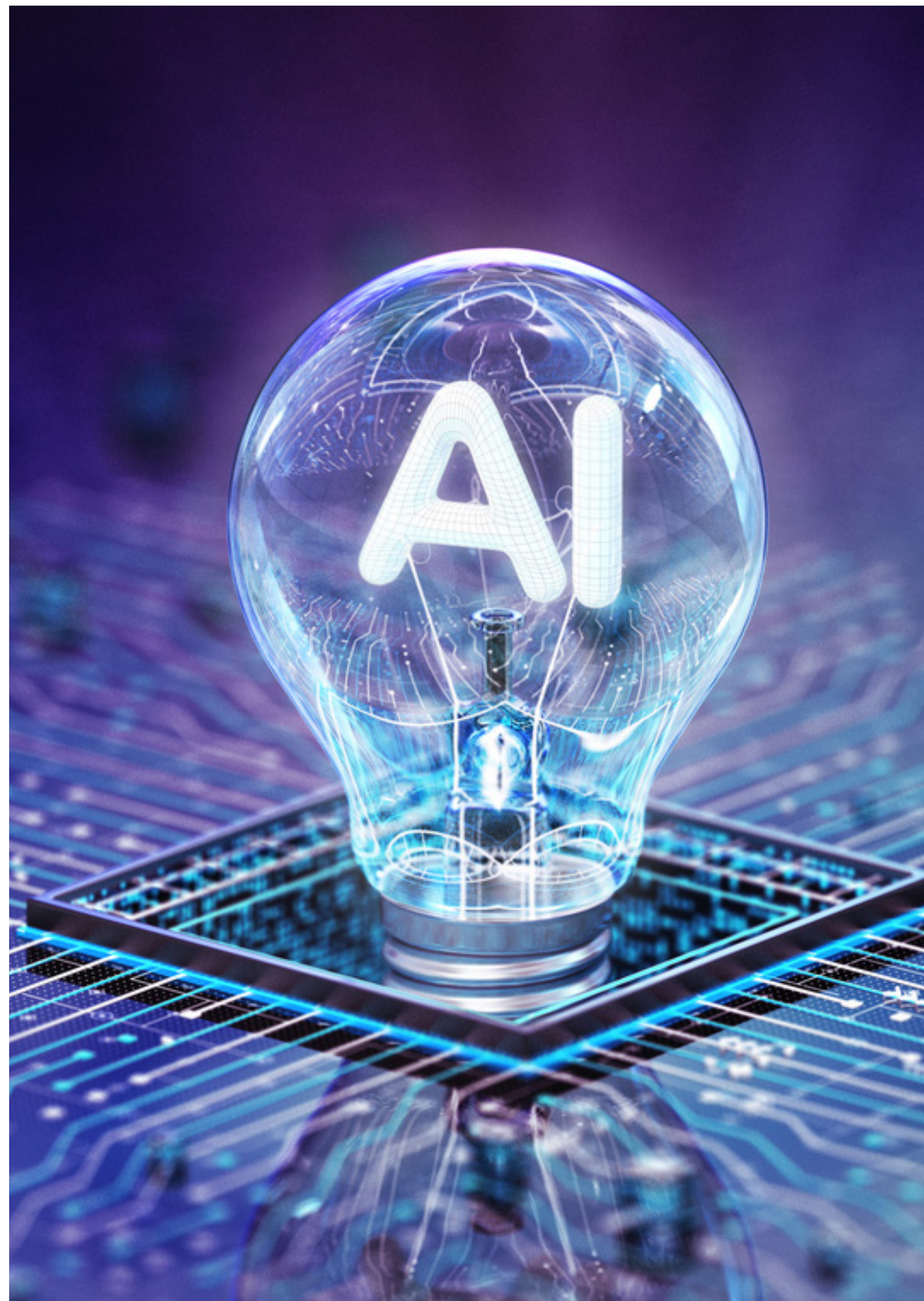
AI-POWERED ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The integration of AI into assistive technology has been transformative, particularly for neurodivergent individuals, by helping them stay organised, communicate effectively and maintain focus. Assistive tools now often include features that kick-start tasks by offering idea prompts and tailored reminders drawn from previous activities, seen in applications like audio note-taking and mind-mapping software.

Additionally, established assistance programmes have embedded AI features to offer a supportive user experience that guides and encourages users towards being productive and building their self-confidence. There have been improvements in things like text prediction powered by AI, instant subtitles, more accurate speech-to-text and intelligent summarising. These tools help reduce challenges and give reassurance to neurodivergent users, among others. These changes show a bigger pattern: we're moving from separate apps to integrated AI helpers that offer smooth and natural assistance.

THE ROLE OF LEGISLATION AND POLICY

The Equality Act 2010 has been a pivotal piece of legislation in promoting digital accessibility by legally requiring employers and service providers, including those operating online, to make reasonable adjustments to avoid unlawful discrimination against people with disabilities. This law has compelled organisations to anticipate barriers and re-evaluate their digital offerings, from websites to mobile applications, to maximise accessibility to all users. As a result, there has been a marked improvement in the inclusivity of digital services.



THE IMPACT OF MOBILE AND WEB ACCESSIBILITY

The widespread use of smartphones and tablets has been a driving force in improving digital accessibility.

Mobile devices come equipped with various built-in features specifically designed to help users with accessibility. For example, screen readers can vocalise text on the screen, while voice recognition allows users to control their devices with spoken commands. Additionally, options to adjust text size and colour contrast settings help those with visual impairments, as well as haptic feedback (such as vibrations in response to an interaction with a device) provide tactile responses for users who are deaf or hard of hearing. Such features have granted individuals more autonomy, something that was much more challenging before smart phones.

Features have granted individuals more autonomy

There has also been a significant push towards making websites and web applications more accessible. Developers and content creators are increasingly aware of the need to consider diverse user needs when building digital products. This shift towards inclusivity has led to the adoption of best practices in web development, such as following the WCAG guidelines, which recommend ways to make content more accessible. For instance, ensuring that websites can be navigated using a keyboard alone benefits users who cannot use a mouse. Descriptive alt text for images aids those using screen readers and clear, simple layouts help users with cognitive disabilities.

LOOKING AHEAD

The past year has shown remarkable advancements in assistive technology, driven largely by AI innovations. As we celebrate Global Accessibility Awareness Day 2025 on May 15th, we should acknowledge these developments and continue to advocate for technologies that empower and support all individuals to thrive.

The Power of Community in Workplace Mental Health

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK 2025

This year under the thoughtful guidance of the Mental Health Foundation, the spotlight for Mental Health Awareness Week is on an element fundamental to our emotional and psychological welfare, 'community'.

The choice of community is an acknowledgment of the essential role it plays in our lives – a role that extends far beyond the simple act of socialising. A sense of belonging, the security that comes from a supportive network and the collective purpose found in communal ties are not just luxuries, they are essentials for our mental and emotional wellbeing.

The feeling of being part of a community provides individuals with a psychological safety net

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNITY

In an era where isolation and mental health challenges are increasingly prevalent, the need for supportive networks is more important than ever. A sense of being understood and of shared experience can make all the difference to an individual's mental wellbeing.

The feeling of being part of a community provides individuals with a psychological safety net. When people feel held, seen and heard, they are more likely to open up about their struggles, seek help and employ

coping strategies that they might not have considered in isolation. This communal aspect of support is not just about providing a shoulder to cry on; it's about creating an environment where individuals can share their experiences without fear of judgement, and receive empathy, validation and encouragement.

Communities can come in various forms, from local support groups to digital forums and friend circles to workplace networks, each offering members a shared identity and a collective voice.

BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE WORK COMMUNITY

A workplace is more than just a place to work; it can also be a powerful community that supports and enhances the mental health of its members. The increasing recognition of mental wellbeing as a critical component of overall health has placed a spotlight on the workplace as a potential source of both stress and support.

We know that good work promotes good mental health. A job can help look after mental health by providing:

- ▶ a source of income
- ▶ a sense of identity
- ▶ contact and friendship with others
- ▶ a steady routine and structure
- ▶ opportunities to contribute and gain skills.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGERS AND ORGANISATIONS

An inclusive and supportive work environment is conducive to positive mental wellbeing and can lead to reduced stress levels, higher job satisfaction and increased productivity. Here are some strategies to help create a supportive working environment:

- ▶ **Stress management initiatives**
Organisations could consider implementing stress management initiatives such as mindfulness sessions, relaxation spaces and training.
- ▶ **Regular one-to-one meetings**
Regular one-to-ones between employees and their managers can build the foundation of a supportive work community. It is an opportunity for managers to get to know their colleagues individually and build stronger bonds. These meetings provide a space for employees to articulate their needs, discuss their goals, challenges and get support, creating a culture of open communication and individual attention.
- ▶ **Internal communities**
Creating communities within the organisation can be an excellent way to bring together individuals with shared experiences or interests. Examples include parenting groups, networks for neurodiverse employees or affinity groups for underrepresented populations. These groups not only provide a sense of belonging but also serve as a platform for advocacy and support.
- ▶ **Mental health champions**
Appointing mental health champions within the workplace can help in raising awareness and providing peer support. Champions can be trained to recognise signs of mental health struggles and to guide colleagues towards appropriate resources.
- ▶ **Inclusive policies and training**
Organisations should ensure that their policies are inclusive, for example access to flexible working and that staff are trained in mental health awareness. This creates a more supportive environment for all employees and ensures that those with mental health challenges are not inadvertently excluded or marginalised.



LEVERAGING WORKPLACE COMMUNITY

By participating in peer support groups or mentoring schemes, people can build relationships that provide emotional support and a sense of belonging. Involvement in team-building activities and social committees can also foster a sense of camaraderie and create connection, offering a counterbalance to work-related stress, whilst contributing to diversity and inclusion initiatives can help employees feel valued and understood.

By tapping into these communal resources and networks, employees not only enrich their own mental wellbeing but also contribute to a more supportive and resilient workplace culture.

CONCLUSION

The power of community in supporting mental health cannot be underestimated. It offers a refuge for the vulnerable, a platform for the silenced, and a safety net for all. Organisations have a pivotal role to play in nurturing such communities, starting within the workplace. By adopting strategies that promote inclusion, support, and understanding, managers and organisations can create a work environment where mental wellbeing is a collective priority, and where every employee feels valued, supported and engaged.

How Hypertension Can Lead to Stroke

UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTION

Stroke occurs more than 100,000 times per year in the UK, once every five minutes. It is one of the UK's leading causes of death, responsible for 34,000 deaths annually. That equates to one life lost every 15 minutes.

Stroke and hypertension are two interlinked health conditions that significantly impact public health in the UK. Understanding their relationship, risk factors, prevention strategies and treatment options is crucial for promoting health and reducing the burden of these conditions.



WHAT IS HYPERTENSION?

Hypertension, commonly known as high blood pressure, is a condition where the force of the blood against the artery walls is consistently too high. Blood pressure is measured in millimetres of mercury (mmHg) and is recorded as two numbers: systolic (the pressure when the heart beats) and diastolic (the pressure when the heart rests between beats). A normal blood pressure reading is considered to be between 90/60 and 120/80 mmHg. Hypertension is diagnosed when readings consistently exceed 140/90 mmHg.

CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS OF HYPERTENSION

Several factors contribute to the development of hypertension, including:

- ▶ Genetics – a family history of hypertension increases the risk
- ▶ Age – risk increases the older you are
- ▶ Ethnicity – there are higher rates of high blood pressure in people who are Black or Asian
- ▶ Lifestyle – smoking, poor diet, a lack of physical activity and excessive alcohol consumption
- ▶ Obesity – excess weight can lead to increased blood pressure
- ▶ Stress – chronic stress can contribute to hypertension.

THE LINK BETWEEN HYPERTENSION AND STROKE

High blood pressure is the most significant risk factor for stroke. It can damage the blood vessels, making them more susceptible to blockages or ruptures. Managing hypertension is critical in stroke prevention.

High blood pressure, when not managed, can also increase your risk of heart attack and other cardiovascular diseases as well as kidney disease, dementia and damage to your vision. It can also result in erectile dysfunction.

WHAT IS A STROKE?

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted or reduced, preventing brain tissue from getting oxygen and nutrients. Stroke survivors may suffer lasting damage to movement, speech, vision and thinking abilities. There are two main types of stroke:

- ▶ Ischaemic Stroke: Caused by a blockage in an artery supplying blood to the brain - accounts for most strokes in the UK.
- ▶ Haemorrhagic Stroke: Caused by a rupture of a blood vessel in the brain - accounts for around 15% of strokes in the UK.

There is also a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA), often referred to as a 'mini stroke', which happens when there is a temporary disruption of the blood supply to the brain. Although people fully recover from symptoms of a TIA, it signals a higher risk of stroke.

SYMPTOMS OF STROKE

Recognising the symptoms of a stroke or TIA is crucial for timely intervention to prevent death or significant disability. Common symptoms include:

- ▶ Sudden numbness or weakness – especially on one side of the body or face
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Trouble speaking or understanding speech
- ▶ Vision problems – in one or both eyes
- ▶ Dizziness – loss of balance or coordination
- ▶ Severe headache – with no known cause.

Use the FAST acronym to help quickly identify the main symptoms of a stroke or mini stroke.



FACE

The face may have dropped on one side, the person may not be able to smile, or their mouth or eye may have dropped.



ARMS

The person may not be able to lift both arms and keep them raised because of weakness or numbness in one arm.



SPEECH

Their speech might be unclear or they could be unable to speak, even though they seem awake. They might also have trouble understanding you.



TIME

Every minute counts, so call 999 right away

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

You can help to prevent hypertension and the risk of having a stroke by lifestyle modifications and medical interventions:

- ▶ Healthy diet – consuming a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, oily fish and lean proteins and low in saturated fats and salt.
- ▶ Blood pressure – check your blood pressure (many pharmacies offer free checks) and see your GP if it is 140/90 or above. Most cases of high blood pressure do not cause symptoms so you will not know you have it unless it is checked.
- ▶ Regular exercise – engaging in regular physical activity (at least 150 minutes each week).
- ▶ Weight management – maintaining a healthy weight.
- ▶ Limiting alcohol – ensuring you drink well within the recommended levels of 14 units or less weekly.
- ▶ Smoking cessation – quitting smoking or reducing smoking if you feel unable to stop.
- ▶ Stress management – addressing things that are worrying you and practising relaxation techniques such as meditation, mindfulness and yoga.

At Health Partners Group, our wellbeing services are designed to empower individuals with the knowledge and support needed to make healthy lifestyle choices. These changes are crucial in mitigating issues like hypertension, which subsequently decreases the likelihood of serious health concerns, including stroke and heart disease.

NHS HEALTH CHECK

The NHS Health Check is a free check-up of your overall health for those aged 40 to 74. It can tell you whether you're at higher risk of getting certain health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease and stroke. If you're aged over 65, you'll also be told about symptoms of dementia to look out for.

You should have more regular check-ups if you already have a pre-existing condition such as hypertension or inherited high cholesterol.

More information can be found here: [NHS Health Check](#)

RESOURCES

- ▶ [Stroke Awareness Month | Stroke Association](#)
- ▶ [NHS Health Check](#)
- ▶ [Stroke | NHS](#)
- ▶ [High blood pressure | NHS](#)
- ▶ [Global Accessibility Awareness Day](#)
- ▶ [Guidance and tools for digital accessibility | GOV.UK](#)
- ▶ [Mental Health Awareness Week | Mental Health Foundation](#)
- ▶ [How to support mental health at work publication | Mental Health Foundation](#)
- ▶ [Supporting Mental Health at Work: Practical guidance | CIPD](#)
- ▶ [Top tips for looking after your mental health at work | Mind](#)
- ▶ [Safeguarding Your Mental Health at Work | Ann Craft Trust](#)
- ▶ [How to be mentally healthy at work | Mind](#)
- ▶ [Taking care of your staff's mental health | Mind](#)



NEXT ISSUE:

- ▶ Diabetes Week
- ▶ Healthy Eating
- ▶ Men's Health Week

At Health Partners we offer a full range of tailored health and wellbeing services.

Our thinking is innovative. We constantly develop new responses and tools designed to address the health and wellbeing challenges that face your business and people.

Our commitment is total. We invest in our services, creating new ones and keeping in step with every client. We constantly explore new ways of working and make no compromises in the quality of our services.

Simply put, we are here to help people be their best.