

RCUK Briefing for MLAs: My Right to Cardiac Arrest Recovery

Every year in the UK, approximately [40,000 people](#) experience an out of hospital cardiac arrest where CPR is attempted. Survival has improved, but recovery remains the weakest link. Too many survivors and key supporters face long term physical, cognitive, psychological, and social challenges without consistent support after discharge.

Survivors often describe feeling abandoned once they return home. Key supporters, including family and friends, frequently experience anxiety, distress, and uncertainty with little or no guidance.

“I felt abandoned, like I was left to figure out recovery alone.” — MacLean MacLeod (Survivor)

There is no mandated recovery pathway across Northern Ireland. This creates a postcode lottery in access to rehabilitation, psychological care, and follow up services.

These issues are set out in detail in our report *The Weakest Link: Recovery after cardiac arrest*.

What our report *The Weakest Link: Recovery after cardiac arrest* shows

Resuscitation Council UK's (RCUK) report, *The Weakest Link: Recovery after cardiac arrest*, examines the state of post cardiac arrest recovery across Northern Ireland and the wider UK, and sets out what needs to change so that every survivor and key supporter can access consistent, personalised aftercare. It brings together survivor stories, clinical evidence, and examples of NHS services to show where recovery support works well and where it breaks down.

The report highlights:

- Major gaps in follow up, rehabilitation, and psychological support
- Significant inequalities between regions and communities
- Economic costs linked to avoidable readmissions and delayed recovery
- Evidence that coordinated, multidisciplinary clinics improve outcomes but lack sustainable funding

It also sets out clear national actions, including:

- Embedding the [Survivor Quality Standard](#) in national and devolved cardiac strategies
- Ensuring equitable access to physical, cognitive, psychological, and social support
- Providing dedicated funding for sustainable recovery pathways
- Strengthening multidisciplinary follow up clinics across Northern Ireland and the wider UK
- Supporting peer networks that complement NHS care

- ✓ Prioritising survivor voice in service design and evaluation

These findings make clear that recovery remains the weakest link in the chain of survival and that national action is required.

What is RCUK's Survivor Quality Standard

RCUK's Survivor Quality Standard (QS) is a national framework setting out what every survivor and key supporter should receive after hospital discharge. It focuses on:

- ✓ Holistic assessment before discharge
- ✓ Personalised rehabilitation
- ✓ Support for key supporters
- ✓ Clear information about recovery
- ✓ Timely follow-up and referral routes
- ✓ Coordinated pathways across services

The QS is practical, deliverable, and designed to work within NHS structures. Implementing the QS will:

- ✓ Improve quality of life
- ✓ Reduce avoidable hospital readmissions
- ✓ Support return to work and independence
- ✓ Reduce long-term costs to health and care systems
- ✓ Address inequalities in access to rehabilitation

What we are asking MLAs to do:

- ✓ Champion survivor and key supporter voices
- ✓ Support embedding the Survivor QS into national strategies
- ✓ Engage with survivor and key supporter groups, such as [Sudden Cardiac Arrest UK](#)
- ✓ Advocate for equitable access to recovery services

To express interest in becoming an advocate, please contact: publicaffairs@resus.org.uk.

About us

Resuscitation Council UK is saving lives by developing guidelines, influencing policy, delivering courses, and supporting cutting-edge research. Through education, training and research, we're working towards the day when everyone in the country has the skills they need to save a life.