Background
Following stroke, up to 45% of people experience some degree of dysphagia (difficulty swallowing). Poor nutrition can have a negative impact on functional recovery, and is associated with increased risk of complications and ultimately length of stay in hospital. Decisions regarding nutrition can be ethically challenging. Providing high quality nutritional care is complex and multifaceted.

Project Aim
To ensure consistently high standards of ward based care in relation to swallow and nutrition management.

Project Design/Strategy
We undertook a focussed quality improvement project, which aimed to comprehensively review current practice, and to identify and implement improvements, in relation to the nutritional care pathway on our stroke unit. The quality of nutritional care was evaluated through: interviews with patients and relatives; a staff survey; an audit of nutritional care; mapping of current processes; and a review of mortality data. Inconsistencies in clinical care and decision making were identified. Through this evaluation, we identified the processes of care that, when performed collectively, would constitute high quality nutritional care.

Changes Made
We developed a Nutritional Care Bundle. This initially consisted of a set of 5 desired practices, and was later refined to include 7 desired practices. It was piloted alongside a Nutritional Care Record, which aimed to ensure all pertinent information relating to nutrition and swallow was accessible, and used to inform MDT decision making. Staff training also took place.

Outcomes
At baseline, 15% of patients were receiving all 5 elements of the original bundle. This rose to 45% in months 14-16. The average % of the bundle complete rose from 69% at baseline, to 79% at follow up.

Lessons Learned
- Time must be invested in exploring and clearly defining the problem before embarking on change.
- Early and on-going engagement with the MDT is essential to embed changes into daily practice.
- Selecting the most efficient and effective means of data collection is crucial to demonstrating improvement.

Next Steps
- To integrate data collection into existing systems, which will enable the use of SPC charts.
- To include the Nutritional Care Bundle standards within the newly developed stroke service competencies.