

FEBRUARY 2012

Headway Essex

STEVE SHEARS

Community Support Manager



This is a slightly belated hello from me in my capacity as the new Manager of the Headway Essex Community Support Service. I started in my new role in early September 2011 and am now getting to grips with how the service runs as well as thinking about improvements that might enhance the services we offer.

My background is in psychotherapy, residential social work and I completed an MSc in Psychology with the Open University that concentrated on the study of the neurophysiology of behaviour. This took the form of studies into the contribution of different brain systems to addiction and also computer modelling of damage to the ability to recognise faces following traumatic brain injury.

Before coming to Headway Essex I worked for Headway UK for over eight years and over five of those as the Head of Training. (Please see information opposite.) This involved many assignments in the UK and Europe. Also during this time I have been practising as a psychotherapist with clients who are living with brain injury and the psychological difficulties that sometimes arise from that.

I have now visited all the support groups we run and have met many of you already. I hope I will get to know you all much better in time and

UNDERSTANDING ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY (ABI)

An interactive workshop for all professionals working with service users who are living with ABI

I will run this workshop at Birkett Long Solicitors, Number One, Legg Street, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1JS on Thursday 8 March 2012 between 10.00am and 4.00pm. The price per delegate is £50.00, which will include lunch and all materials.

Learning outcomes: delegates will...

- understand more about the nature of ABI and why it is called a hidden disability
- have a better understanding of the cognitive, psychological, behavioural and physical aspects of brain injury and be able to apply it to service users in a practical way;
- have considered the impact ABI has on family and relatives;
- Consider the benefits of early intervention to promote re-enablement.

Booking:

By cheque - Telephone our office to ask for a booking form or print one off our website (www.headwayessex.org.uk). Send a cheque made out to Headway Essex, along with the completed booking form, to Headway Essex, Community Support, 58b Head Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1PB.

Purchase order - If an invoice is required, please enclose an official purchase order/letter of authorisation and send it to the address above. You can also fax your booking and purchase order to us on **01206 547486**.

Your confirmation letter will give you details of and directions to the event, so please bring it with you on the day. If you have any further questions about this workshop, please contact me on **01206 768797**.

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IN INJURY....a guide for young people”

A new publication written by Jo Johnson, Consultant Neuropsychologist, and illustrated by Lauren Densham.

Questions are often asked by those who have sustained ABI and their partners about the effect ABI has on their children. Young people in families changed by brain injury are often the forgotten victims. At a time of trauma and uncertainty they are frequently left feeling upset and confused. In her book, Jo Johnson has tried to do the following:

- Explain why people change after brain injury;
- Give information about the brain that is easy to understand;
- Help younger readers to think about ways they can look after themselves;
- Talk about personal feelings and why it is so confusing and upsetting living with a parent who has had a brain injury.

The book has been written in a clear and colourful way that will appeal to young people across a wide range of ages. It can be used as a standalone resource or to support individual or group work in clinical or home settings.

Reviews:

‘An excellent book that will be a source of support for many young people’. (Headway UK)

‘This is an innovative and creative new book which will help young people and provide coping strategies at a very difficult time.’ (Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust)

‘I realised I was not the only person feeling rubbish and stressed.’ (Phoebe -14)

‘My husband had a head injury six years ago. I wish this book had been around then to give to my children.’

The book costs £9.99 and can be ordered from Headway UK. Visit the website at www.headway.org.uk or call **0800 800 2244**.

MY SWIMMING CHALLENGE!

My name is Stephen Hall, and in June 2010 at the age of 39 I had a serious heart attack, which caused lots of blood clots to travel into my brain and left me with a brain injury. This has caused difficulties with my memory and thinking skills, but I was determined to get my life back on track in the best way I could.

As part of my therapy, it was suggested by my occupational therapist (OT) that I complete a one mile open water swim for the charity Headway Essex that has provided me with so much support. This meant I had to do a lot of training for months. (I was even able to pass my driving test during my training.) At the end of training I had the opportunity to try out open water swimming with SwimForTri (SFT) at Alexandra Lake, Lakeside, Thurrock (the lake I was going to swim in). The experience opened my eyes and chilled my bones, but with the support of SFT and my family I vowed to complete the challenge.

On the day of the swim I felt extremely nervous. However, when I saw how many of my friends and family had come to support me, I was able to pull on a really tight wetsuit and get into the water. Although the wetsuit was uncomfortable, I was glad of it as the water was a chilly 14°! Seeing all the other swimmers and hearing all the encouragement on the side gave me the determination to just do it!

The swim itself was really hard and I was on a deadline. I had to swim the mile in under an hour as I was in the first wave. If I hadn’t managed this, I wouldn’t have been swamped by the swimmers doing the 3K and 5K races. I didn’t quite make it in time, but managed to raise £1375.00 for Headway Essex. I was really tired for about three days after the race, but I felt good because I finally gave something back to the community and my family and friends were so proud of me. Many thanks!

Stephen Hall - Basildon Support Group.

Headway Essex thanks Stephen for his hard work and for the considerable amount of money he raised on our behalf. We also thank Steven’s partner Katie for raising money for us

NEWS FROM SOUTH ESSEX

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P Our most recent Life After Brain Injury Group (LABIG) ran for 12 weeks from 26 September to 12 December 2011, and its aims were to:-

- raise individuals own understanding and awareness of brain injury including the various causes, types, brain anatomy and the terms that are used;
- to recognise some of the effects of brain injury and how this impacts on the life of the person and his/her relatives and social network;
- to increase awareness of some of the coping and adjustment skills that may apply to an individual's own situation;
- to develop social contacts and peer support from within the group itself;
- to be with others who can relate to some of the difficulties experienced following a brain injury and who are in a similar situation.

Nine people attended regularly throughout this period and their brain injuries consisted of a combination of trauma (including road traffic accident, assault and sporting injury) and non-trauma such as stroke, aneurysm and anoxia.

We also had the weekly input of Occupational Therapist Sam Pitman who brought her clinical expertise and knowledge of ABI to the sessions. The group worked extremely hard and, as has been the case in many of the groups Headway Essex runs, the peer support was excellent, along with the understanding and empathy shown to each other.

With the changed plan of running the group for a fixed timescale of 12 weekly sessions, the programme followed a tight schedule of topics some of which included:

- the anatomy of the brain;
- concentration and attention;
- memory;
- communication - verbal and non-verbal, body language and expression;
- emotion, mood, anxiety and anger.

We also asked the group to think of a goal they

with support from family, relatives and friends. These were either achieved or part achieved, and we hope this has increased confidence and independence. In addition, the learning outcomes showed a general increase from week one to week 12. For example, increased understanding of brain injury, increased awareness of strategies to cope with certain difficulties and increased confidence and self esteem.

Feedback provided by group members either through personal presentations or verbal opinion was extremely positive. Our thanks go to the members of LABIG for their input and enthusiasm, which made the whole experience a pleasant one. Our thanks also go to their partners and relatives who showed great interest in what was going on. And finally, many thanks to volunteers and Headway Essex staff who contributed so much time and effort.

BASILDON SUPPORT GROUP

Many thanks to those of you who attended the first support group meeting of 2012 on a chilly January evening. With over 25 people in attendance we had an interesting review of the support group meeting itself. The message appeared to be to continue with more of the same, particularly with regard to learning about aspects of brain injury along with local health and social care resources.

So we will try and cover some of the topics both with guest speakers expertise and by using our own knowledge within the group. We have a varied list to work on, including the brain itself, the mobility, physical, behavioural and emotional aspects of brain injury and preparation for employment.

If you have any further ideas for guest speakers or topics, please continue to let us know.

For our next two meetings we have Stephen Rabbitts, Carers Project Manager South Essex Partnership Trust, and Andrew Kelso, Consultant Neurologist, respectively. We look forward to seeing you on 14 February.

T GROUP MEETINGS - 2012

**At: Stroke Services, 85 Frinton Road,
Essex, CO15 5UH from 7.00pm to 8.30pm**

On: Tuesday 7th February (social evening)
Tuesday 6th March
Tuesday 3rd April (social evening)

Basildon

**At: St John Ambulance South Essex Headquarters, Sandon Road,
Pitsea, Essex, SS14 1TH from 7.30pm to 9.30pm**

On: Tuesday 14th February
Tuesday 13th March
Tuesday 10th April

Chelmsford

**At: Swift House, Hedgerows Business Park, Springfield, Chelmsford Rd,
Essex, CM2 5PF from 7.00pm to 9.00pm**

On: Tuesday 21st February
Tuesday 20th March
Tuesday 17th April

CARERS SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Colchester

**At: The Headway Centre, 2 Boxted Road, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JD
from 10.30am to 12.30pm**

On: Friday 24th February
Friday 23rd March
Friday 27th April

South Essex

**At: Benfleet Methodist Church, High Street, South Benfleet, Essex,
SS7 5LH from 7.00pm to 9.00pm**

On: Thursday 23rd February
Thursday 22nd March
Thursday 26th April

SOCIAL EVENINGS - please contact 01206 845945 if you wish to attend

**At: The Headway Centre, 2 Boxted Road, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JD
from 7.00pm to 9.00pm**

On: Monday 6th February
Monday 5th March
Monday 2nd April