

Headway
Essex

IMPACT REPORT

Our work and impact

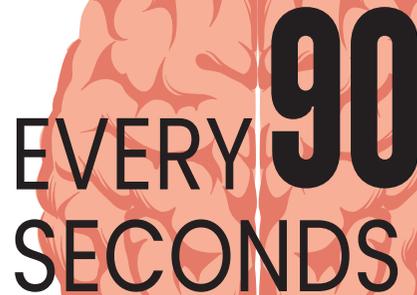
2024-25



MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

Headway Essex was formed in 1985 and for forty years has been working alongside people living with brain injury, their families and carers to navigate challenges and build bright futures.

Focusing on each person's potential rather than their challenges to make a positive difference in their lives and to realise personal goals.



EVERY 90 SECONDS

A person is admitted to hospital in the UK with a brain injury every 90 seconds.

“

My life was turned upside down when I had a stroke, I was only 37. I lost all but one friend as they didn't know how to be around me anymore! Then I found Headway, I come to the group every single week and when I'm here I just feel normal again. I have made new friends, friends who just get me - it has literally been a life saver.

”

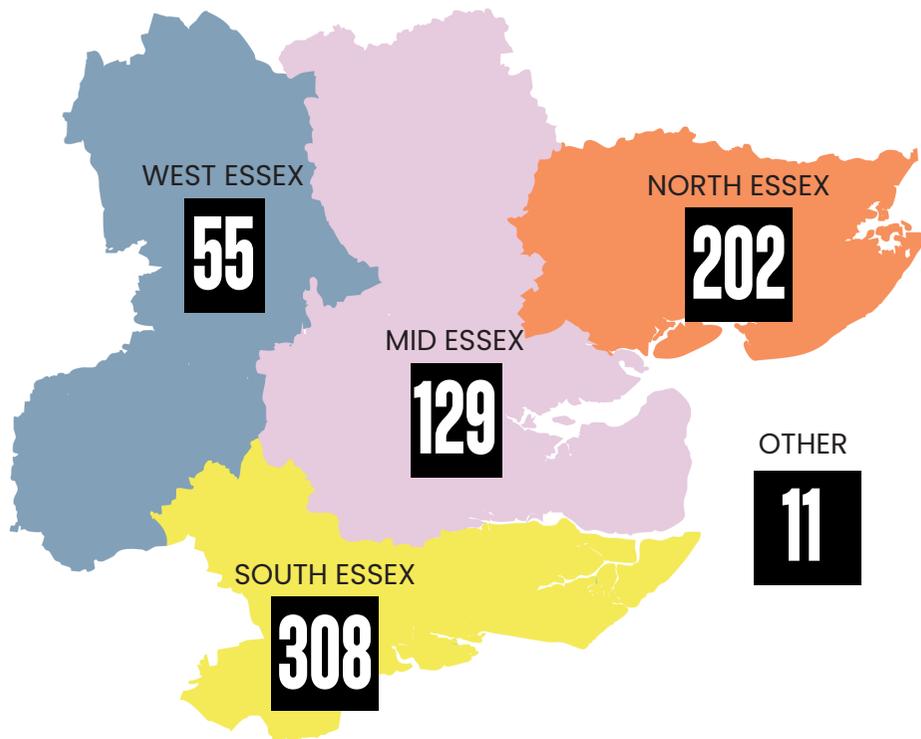


A brain injury can be caused by accidents, illnesses or medical complications, affecting socialising, independence, employment, relationships and mental health.

The injury can change how the brain functions and can lead to difficulties with memory, thinking, moving, emotions communicating, and fatigue.

It can affect a person's day to day life, and has a knock-on impact on the lives of their family and friends.

It is a life altering injury.

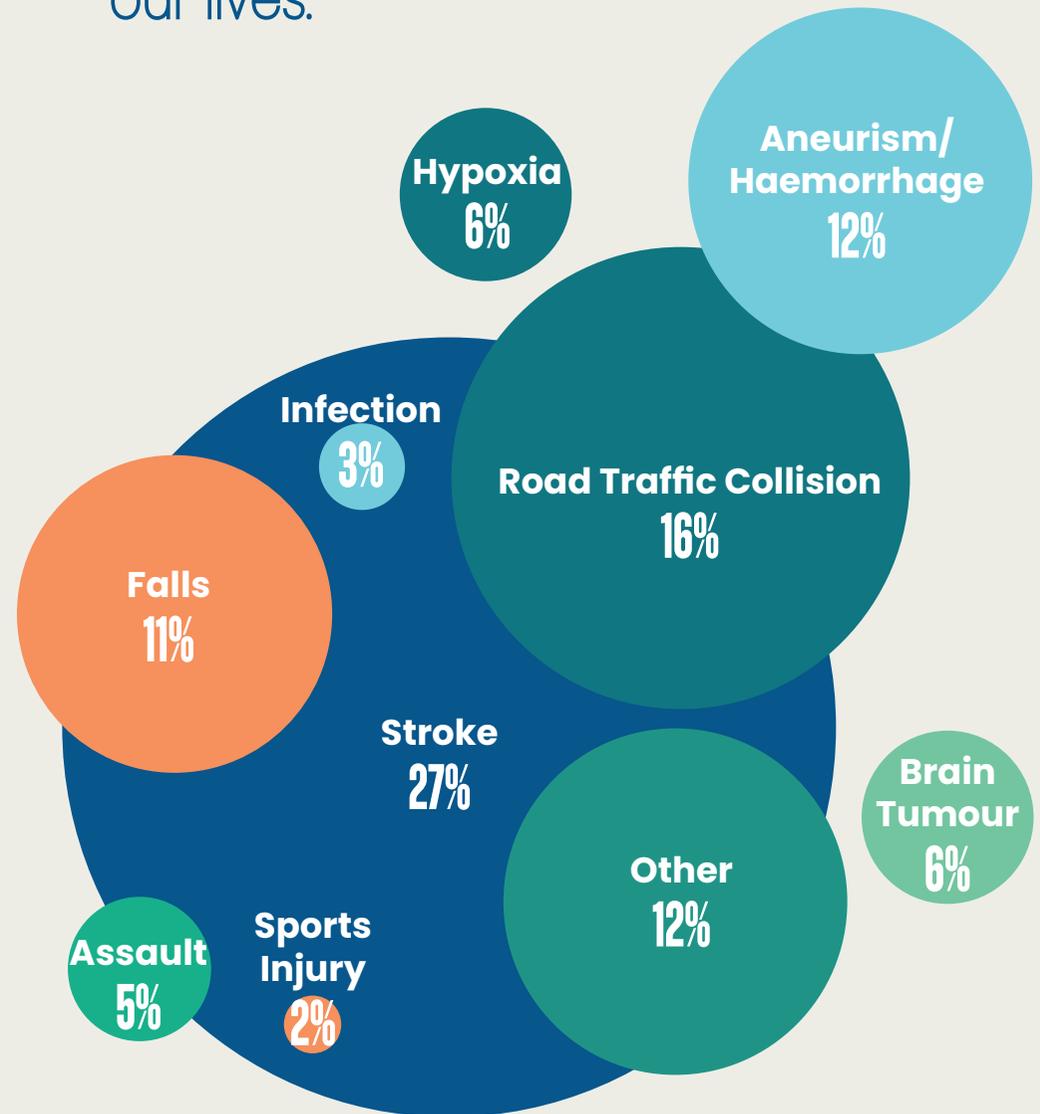


This year we worked with over 700 people across Essex who have an acquired brain injury, both in the community and at our two day service hubs. Together we worked towards each person's rehabilitation goals while supporting them and their families as they adjust to life after brain injury.

- ★ Improving overall wellbeing
- ★ Relearning life skills
- ★ Regaining independence
- ★ Growing in confidence

- ♥ Helping families stay strong
- ♥ Understanding brain injury better
- ♥ Building new support networks
- ♥ Focusing on carers' and family members' wellbeing

No-one is prepared for the impact of a brain injury. It can happen to any of us at any time in our lives.





Brain injury rehabilitation timelines vary, with the most rapid progress typically occurring in the first six months.

However, significant improvement can continue for years, with some individuals regaining skills over a lifetime.

Key milestones often appear around six months to two years, with continued improvements in speech, mobility, and cognitive abilities, though the rate of recovery slows over time.

RECOVERY MILESTONES

The sooner we can reach someone with a brain injury the sooner we can help them.

Hospital link workers :

- connecting with patients at their bedside
- supporting families through a challenging time

offering :

- + emotional support
- + practical information
- + guidance on navigating the hospital system

early intervention :

- ♥ reducing anxiety
- ♥ improving understanding of brain injury

Ensuring families feel supported from the point of admission through to discharge and beyond, creating a smoother and more informed recovery journey.

Our hospital link work enables us to reach people sooner after their brain injury, so we can be there for them and their support network earlier. Working in the hospital we build strong relationships with hospital staff and health professionals, and raise awareness of our services and support.

Our Hospital Link Workers spoke to:

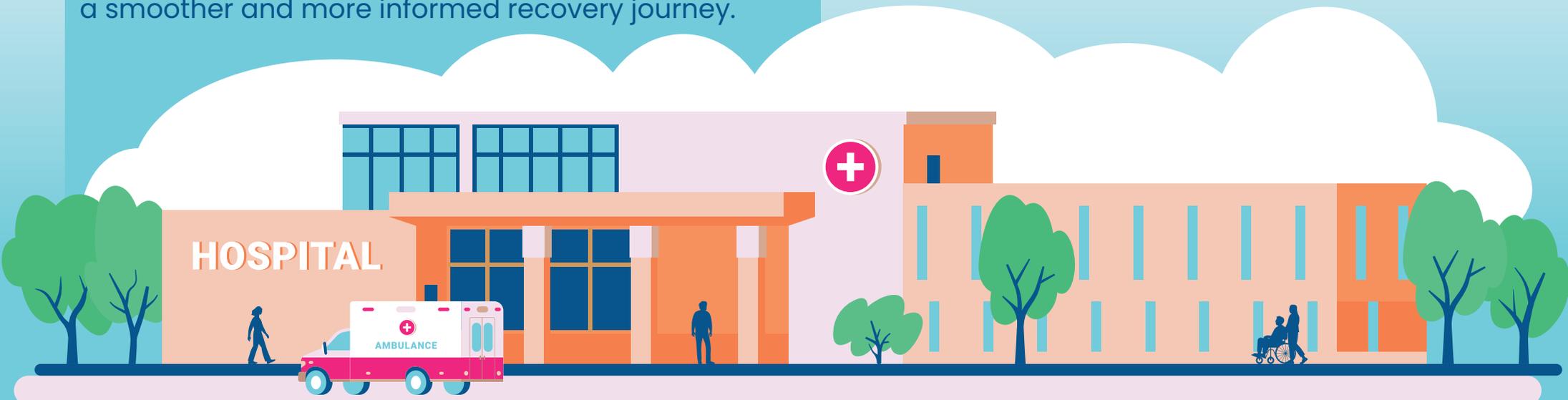
218 Patients

132 Family Members

335 Hospital Professionals

7

We visit all
7 hospitals
in Essex



COMMUNITY

Our community teams work tirelessly across Essex, in all towns and villages, providing vital assistance for people face to face and over the telephone. They also run support groups and social groups.

Their work keeps family units together and helps the person with the injury regain their independence, develop new support networks, improve their confidence, mental health and wellbeing.

Each month, we run 12 friendly support groups across Essex.

144 opportunities for people living with an acquired brain injury to connect with others, share experiences and tips, hear from experts in brain injury care and rehabilitation, and most importantly, feel less alone.

We attended over **260** meetings, advocating for our service users. We work closely with social services and health professionals.

1,165
attendees

997
Phone calls

79
Home visits

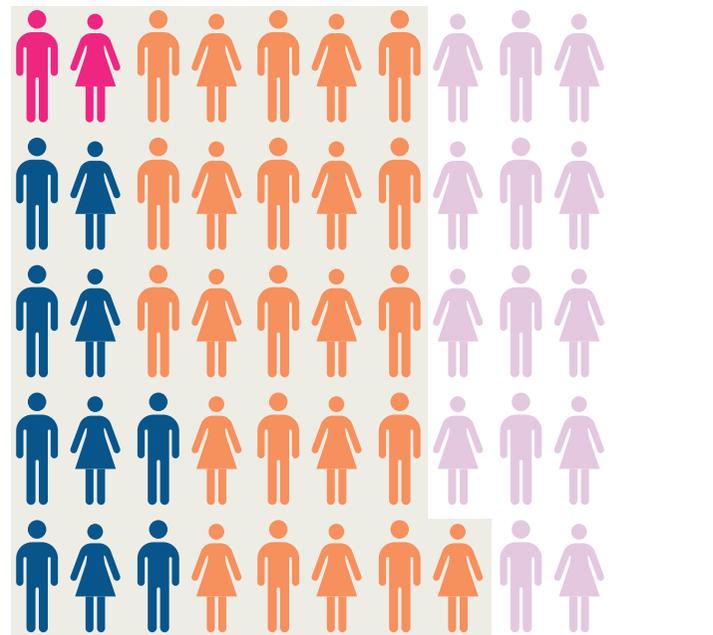
– bringing support directly to people, wherever they are.





The NHS is highly effective at treating physical injuries, but many people leave hospital with a brain injury and limited ongoing support.

Without this, challenges can quickly escalate, affecting families, finances, and physical and mental wellbeing. Strong support systems are essential after discharge.



■	18-29 yrs	5%
■	30-45 yrs	20%
■	46-64 yrs	48%
■	65 yrs +	27%

“ Being vulnerable is a strength not a weakness. When I met people who truly wanted to make a difference in my life, who wanted to be by my side through what I was going through, I felt I was safe to let go. I could fall and know that they would catch me and have my back. ”

3/4 Almost three quarters of the people we support are of working age.

Brain injury can cause long-term, often invisible effects that make sustaining or returning to work difficult, even years after the injury.

Carers may also face challenges as caring responsibilities increase, with unpredictable demands affecting employment, financial stability, wellbeing and long-term career prospects.

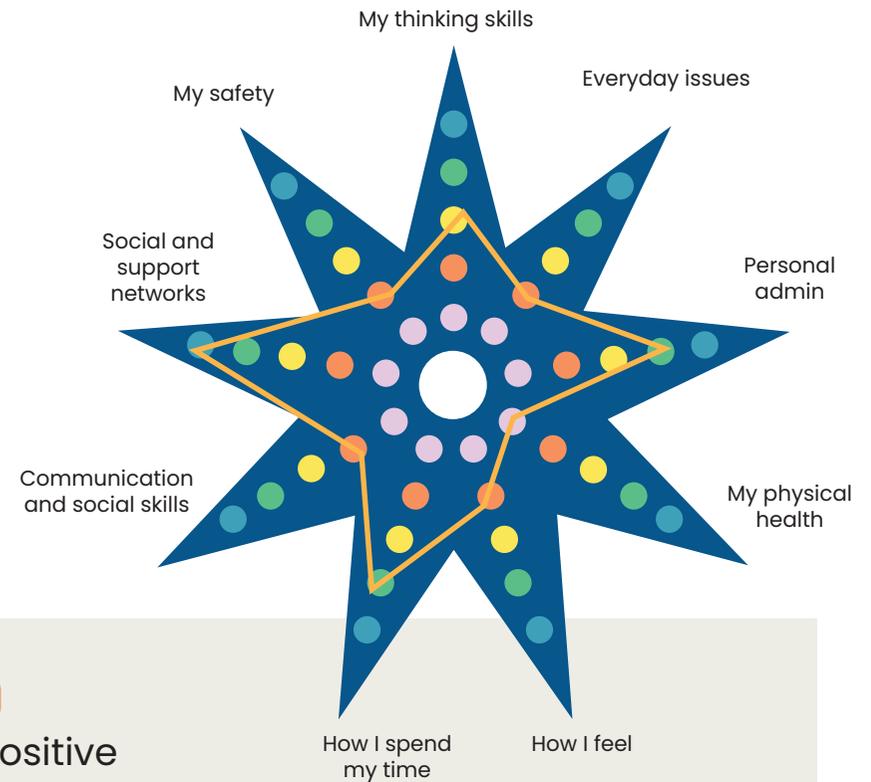
MEASURING SUCCESS

Our day service staff work closely with each client to understand their individual goals and support them in making meaningful progress.

We use the specialised Brain Injury Star Outcomes tool to track progress and ensure our support is tailored to each person's needs.



**Alongside the Outcomes Star, we use client surveys to understand the impact of our work. In our most recent survey, carried out in September 2024, we received 100 responses.*



79%

are encouraged to look after their physical and mental health and their general health and wellbeing has improved.

76%

feel more positive about their future.

94%

have a better understanding of the effect of their brain injury and how it affects them and those close to them.

73%

feel better able to cope day to day.

88%

find it beneficial to meet others living with a brain injury.

73%

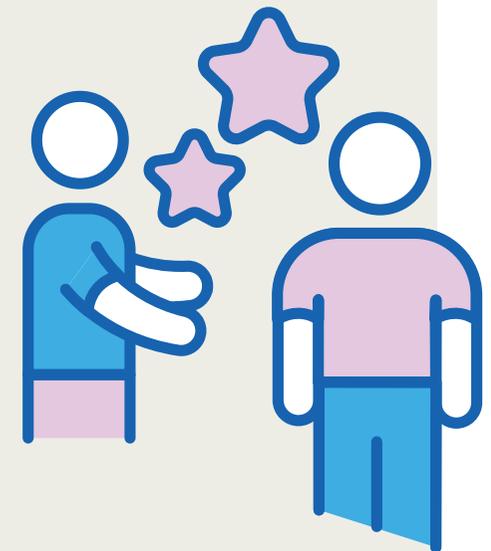
feel more confident socialising with others.

82%

feel more confident since using Headway's services.

82%

feel their independence has improved.



WHERE WOULD YOU GO IF HEADWAY DIDN'T EXIST?

We asked 140 of our service users where they would turn if Headway didn't exist.

Many said they would have to rely on already stretched public services, while others would turn to family and friends, placing additional pressure on their personal networks.

Turn to GP/Hospital

27%

Rely on family/friends

36%

Ask Social Services

12%

Seek help online

14%

Other services

11%





“ I feel like I have found my ‘tribe’. The support from the facilitators and the group attendees too has been phenomenal. I have learned to accept my limitations. It’s a bit of a bumpy road at the moment as I feel I was fighting it for so long to prepare to return to work. I’m learning to live with the ‘new me’ with the support of these amazing people. ”

“ I found this course absolutely amazing and wonderfully helpful in restoring my self-confidence. It also helped in allowing me to function in group work. It restored my sense of identity and accepting my new self. It helped me ‘fight through the fog’. ”

Families and friends are the unsung champions, bringing stability, understanding, emotional support, and a sense of connection that helps someone feel less alone as they recover and adjust.

Family support plays a huge part in someone’s recovery, but it can also take a real toll on the person providing that care. Many caregivers put their own needs to one side, which can lead to stress, exhaustion, and emotional strain, and sometimes even affect their health or sense of identity. With so much focus on supporting their loved one, it’s easy for carers to forget to look after themselves too.



391

people attended our **Brain Injury and Me** training in 2024/25

CARING FOR THE CARERS

Our Don't Forget About Me sessions support those who are caring for a loved one with a brain injury. Many carers step into this role without realising how much it will change their own lives, so these sessions are designed to listen, support, and help carers understand what to expect and how to look after themselves too.



42%

of carers said their physical health has suffered as a result of caring

35%

of carers said their mental health was bad or very bad

30%

said their physical health was bad or very bad

74%

of carers said they had felt stressed or anxious,

40%

feel depressed.

"I struggled for months – alone – trying to support my husband. Headway was the first to ask 'how I was'. I was encouraged to attend a group session and this course. I have met some incredible people and learnt so much. It's a wonderful feeling to know that I am not alone."

Carers Support Group

211

attendees

"I felt able to talk freely, in confidence with others who knew my situation, understand my difficulties, stress, emotional burnout and I feel I can express my darkest days and know everyone will listen, support and encourage me to keep going."

"I wanted my mum to attend this course because she was struggling after my dad's brain injury, however I didn't think she would attend alone. I am very grateful I was given the opportunity to attend with her. She is like a different person, having gained an understanding of why my dad does certain things. It has also made her realise and understand she is not alone."

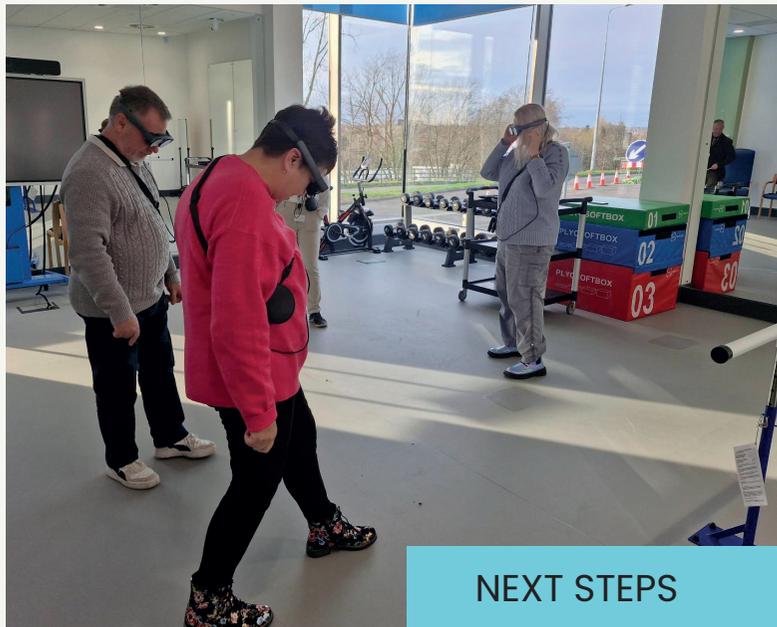
*data from The Carers UK State of Caring 2025 survey

EVERYONE INCLUDED

We believe strongly in equal and fair access to brain injury support for all and actively seek to work with partner organisations and communities to make this happen.

We respond to the needs of our clients by setting up services and outreach programmes targeted at underserved communities and demographics.

Taking it out into the community - through schools talks and community engagement we share health, concussion, bike safety, and brain injury awareness.



Headway Essex partnered with the University of Essex to deliver Next Steps, for people facing barriers to brain injury rehabilitation such as long waiting lists, limited funding, or lack of diagnosis. Providing an alternative route to essential rehabilitation, filling a gap in statutory health and social care and giving practical experience and specialist brain injury knowledge for healthcare students.

The results in numbers

When asked:

I feel more informed about my brain injury

100% strongly agreed

The group sessions have helped me feel less isolated

100% strongly agreed

The one-on-one activities have provided personalised support and guidance

100% strongly agreed

My confidence has improved since attending this course

80% agreed

I have gained practical strategies for daily life and recovery

93% agreed

FAIR SUPPORT

Headway Essex has been working with the Young Offender Institution at HMP Chelmsford and with those in the community on probation orders, with an acquired brain injury to see how we can help address health inequalities and access to help.

Recent research has found 60% of the UK prison population has a history of brain trauma.

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) is often called a 'hidden disability' as the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional consequences may be overlooked or misinterpreted as behaviour that challenges.

The impact of brain injury can be linked to:

- increased risk of violence
- earlier age of first incarceration
- greater number of convictions
- institutional infractions
- reconviction
- alcohol and drug misuse
- mental illness
- a higher number of suicide attempts.

Awareness and support for offenders with brain injury in the Criminal Justice System are currently limited. Recent conversations with the East of England Probation Service highlighted a clear need for specialist ABI support for people on probation, along with training to help staff better communicate with and support individuals with ABI.

HMP Chelmsford is a Category B - Adult Male/ Young Offenders Institution, which can accommodate up to 745 adult prisoners and young offenders. That means as many as 447 could have some form of ABI



Could have some form of ABI

60% of the UK prison population has a history of brain trauma

Risk of ending up in prison more than

DOUBLED

if you have a brain injury

We estimate that if only 20% of the eligible prison population are responsive to the extra support, this could improve the outcomes for 89 individuals a year within HMP Chelmsford alone. This could be significantly higher for those on probation.

Focus will be on first time young offenders with an ABI, as this early intervention is likely to be the most successful in helping to prevent reoffending.

20

We estimate the role will support 20 individuals a year with casework.



Fresh perspectives - Person centred approach - Enthusiasm - Deepening empathy - Clinical understanding - Inclusive support

CHANGING THE FUTURE OF BRAIN INJURY CARE

By working closely with health students, we can help cultivate the next generation of compassionate and skilled professionals



Social work

People living with brain injuries often have long-term needs that aren't always obvious. Some things are easy to spot, like more visible disabilities, but a lot of the challenges take time and careful attention to really understand. These can include fatigue, memory issues, and difficulties recognising their own struggles — sometimes called the frontal lobe paradox.

Helping social workers understand brain injury and how it affects people is key to making sure no one feels ignored or unsupported. To close the gap between what people need and what professionals know we work closely with social workers and offer Brain Injury Awareness training and support.

CHANGING THE FUTURE OF BRAIN INJURY CARE

6 Occupational Therapy students

2 Physiotherapy students

1 Social Work students

9 Allied Health Profession students joined us for work placement over the year.

2,050 clinical hours contributed to their education, and development of brain injury education for clinicians of the future.



Improving lives after brain injury for forty years

Follow our story on social media

We have lively social media accounts with regular updates and photos of our activities and events.

www.headwayessex.org.uk

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