

Spring 2016

Headway News



The magazine of **Headway - the brain injury association**

NOTHING HITS HARDER THAN THE TRUTH
CONCUSSION
BASED ON A TRUE STORY

**We review
Hollywood's take
on concussion**

*'Our son left
a lasting legacy'*

**Saddle sore:
#HeadwayHeroes
ride 14,000 miles
in 130 days**

**Stars shine at
Annual Awards**

**Disability benefit
claimants left waiting**

COLUMBIA PICTURES PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH LUSTAN CAPITAL AND VILLAGE ROADSHOW PICTURES A SCOTT FREE / SHUMAN COMPANY / CARA HEINS / MANTULLO COMPANY PRODUCTION "CONCUSSION" ALEC BALOVIN GUGU MBATHA-RAW
ANGUS HOWARD PAUL BEISW LUKE WILSON AGEWALE AKINLUYE-AGBAJE WITH DAVID MORSE AND ALBERT BROOKS MUSIC BY JAMES NEWTON HOWARD COSTUME DESIGNER DANIELA FINE EDITOR WILLIAM GOLDENHORN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID CRANK AND SALVATORE TOTINO PRODUCED BY MICHAEL SCHAEFFER DAVID CROCKETT BEN WAISBREN BRUCE BERMAN GREG DASGER WRITTEN BY JIM KIRK AND DANIEL LASKAS DIRECTED BY PROSEY SCOTT STYLING BY GIANINA SCOTT HAIR BY DAVID WOLFFHEIM MAKEUP BY LARRY SHUMAN STYLING BY ELIZABETH CANTRELL
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the brain injury association



Become a Friend of Headway

There are three categories of Friends of Headway

- **Standard annual membership:** £30 per year
- **Special rate annual membership** for brain injury survivors/carers and/or students: £20 per year
- **Lifetime membership:** £300 single payment

How your support helps

By becoming a Friend of Headway you will be helping Headway UK provide essential services to brain injury survivors, their families and carers throughout the UK.

For example, £30 can run the freephone confidential helpline for an hour. This essential service is available to anyone with a question about brain injury – whether a survivor, carer, family member or professional working in the field of brain injury.

If you choose to become a lifetime Friend of Headway, your £300 will cover three family training sessions, providing self-help techniques and coping strategies for brain injury survivors, their families and carers.

Your support helps Headway to continue to provide these essential services.

How to join

Contact Friends of Headway Membership Services with your details and payment information:

- Call Lisa Thompson on **0115 924 0800**
- Register online at **www.headway.org.uk**
- Email Lisa Thompson on **membership@headway.org.uk**

Headway is the leading UK-wide charity that supports people to rebuild their lives after brain injury through the provision of information and support services across the UK. To find out more, visit www.headway.org.uk or you can call the freephone helpline on 0808 800 2244 if you need support.



the brain injury association



Welcome to the new-look Headway News!

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This includes a poignant review of the new Will Smith film *Concussion*. Angus Swanson knows how impactful a head injury can be. His own injury, sustained during a rugby match while at university, left him in a coma.

With *Concussion* highlighting the short-term dangers of head injuries in sport, while addressing the long-term implications of repeated head trauma, we asked Angus to give us his opinion on the new Hollywood blockbuster.

There are many ways in which you can join Angus in contributing to *Headway News*. Commenting on articles posted on our social media platforms is one simple way to have your say. You can also email us at headwaynews@headway.org.uk.

We'll also be announcing a host of new initiatives and projects on our website in the coming weeks and months – so do keep visiting www.headway.org.uk to see what we're getting up to!

Best wishes,
The Communications Team

A change is as good as a rest, or so they say. Well, at Headway we don't believe in resting when there's so much work to do to improve life after brain injury. Instead, we have marked the start of what promises to be another busy year for the charity with a fresh new look and feel to our quarterly magazine.

The way in which we all communicate is changing. Social media now provides us all with the means to share information, views and experiences. With our Facebook, Twitter and HealthUnlocked communities thriving, we have included the thoughts of our supporters throughout the magazine.



The magazine of **Headway - the brain injury association**

Hats4Headway Day

Friday 13 May 2016

"I'll be wearing my hat for Headway..."



...will you?"

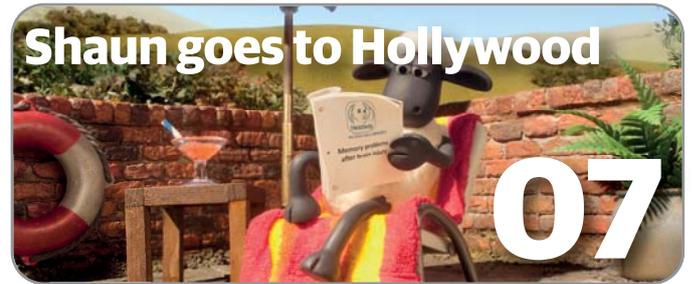
Headway - improving life after brain injury



the brain injury association

**ACTION FOR
BRAIN INJURY WEEK 2016**

9-15 MAY



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#HeadwayHeroes

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#HeadwayHeroes

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A look at *Concussion*, starring Will Smith

news you may have missed...

Brain injury training on menu for pub staff

National pub giant Wetherspoon has accepted more needs to be done to ensure staff have a better understanding of the hidden effects of brain injury after a brain injury survivor was falsely accused of being drunk.



Danielle Stoton (right) with mum Michelle

your views ...



Louise Maycock

Luckily I've not been kicked out of a pub yet but with my balance issues I do appear drunk. I'm now using my crutch and that alone has changed people's attitudes towards me



Hope Fi

Brain injuries are and can be very misunderstood. Staff have great pressures put upon them (by people like) underage drunk drinkers



Viv Gillespie

Such a sad reflection of how people are so judgemental but after showing her Brain Injury Card and then still treating her like this is unforgivable

Danielle Stoton, 19, was refused service and asked to leave by staff at The Gate House pub, in Doncaster, despite showing a brain injury survivor card from Headway which explains the effects of her brain injury.

According to her mother Michelle, going into a busy bar to order drinks was a 'huge step' in Danielle's rehabilitation after sustaining a brain injury in a hit-and-run crash in August 2014.

"What happened has been a real setback," said Michelle. "The incident reinforced how difficult it is for my daughter to do something as simple as ordering a drink. Survivors of brain injury need the support of society to help them move on with their lives."

Headway backed the Stoton family's calls for greater awareness and has offered to provide training to staff at the pub.

Following an investigation into the incident, pub owner J D Wetherspoon apologised to the family, stating that staff will be trained to recognise and respond more appropriately to customers living with the effects of brain injury. The branch also agreed to host a fundraiser for Headway Doncaster to generate extra awareness of brain injury.

"We were extremely concerned to hear of the discrimination experienced by Danielle," said Peter McCabe, Chief Executive of Headway UK.

"It is vital that people realise that just because a person has slurred speech or an unsteady gait, for example, it doesn't necessarily mean they are drunk. We welcome Wetherspoon's announcement that staff will receive brain injury training and we would be happy to work with them on this important issue."



Wetherspoon's The Gate House pub in Doncaster

...news you may have missed

Stephen Hawking to speak at Headway conference

The world's most famous scientist, Professor Stephen Hawking, will be the keynote speaker at a conference to be held by Headway Suffolk in October this year.

The author of international bestseller *A Brief History of Time* has generously agreed to speak about his battle with Motor Neurone Disease in order to act as an inspiration to others affected by long-term neurological conditions.



For further information on the conference, visit www.headwaysuffolk.org.uk/events.



Baaa-riliant news for Shaun

After making it to the big screen last year, Shaun the Sheep and his friends are now ready for their next big adventure – they're 'flock'ing to the Oscars!

Shaun the Sheep: The Movie is up for an Oscar award after being named a finalist in the Best Animation category.

In the movie, Shaun goes in search of The Farmer who is lost in the city after he experiences a minor head injury, leading to memory loss. Headway's details are shared at the end of the film credits, along with a message emphasising the importance of getting support for a minor head injury.

Headway is also featured in a promotional photo showing Shaun

reading up on the effects of brain injury from the Headway booklet *Memory problems after brain injury*.

With *Headway News* going to print before the ceremony on 28 February, all we can do is keep our fingers crossed for the team at Aardman Animations.

Luke Griggs, Director of Communications for Headway, said: "We are all absolutely thrilled that the film has been recognised with an Oscar nomination. We might be a touch biased, but we think Shaun would be a most fitting winner!

"Whatever happens, to be nominated for an Oscar is an incredible achievement. Our congratulations go to everyone responsible for creating this fabulous film."

Headway and SIA conference

The fourth annual Joint Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Conference, hosted by Headway and the Spinal Injuries Association, will take place at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole on 12 May.

Sponsored by **No5 Chambers** and **Christchurch Group**, the event is tailored towards professionals working within the field of catastrophic injury and will cover the many different psychological, legal and neurological aspects of brain and spinal cord injury.



For more information please contact Melanie Dickens at fundraising@headway.org.uk or 0115 924 0800, or visit our website to book a delegate place or exhibition stand.

To keep up-to-date with all the latest news visit...
www.headway.org.uk

07

news you may have missed...

Disability benefit claimants left waiting as assessment costs soar

The cost of delivering disability benefits assessments is forecast to rise to £579m a year in 2016/17 – more than four times the 2012/13 total – according to a report by the National Audit Office (NAO).

This is despite claimants still waiting an average of 23 weeks for a face-to-face assessment and the total number of disability benefits claimants remaining broadly stable.

The NAO report covers assessments for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and the new benefit Personal

Independence Payment (PIP). It found that the Department for Work and



Key findings...

- There was still an estimated backlog of around 280,000 ESA assessments in August 2015
- Applicants face an estimated 23-week wait for their assessment
- A shortage of specialist medical staff has increased the average cost of each assessment by 65% to £190

Pensions (DWP) has “not tackled and may have even exacerbated” problems over waiting times and targets, failing to meet key goals on performance and cost.

Headway Chief Executive, Peter McCabe, said: “With the public finances under intense pressure and scrutiny, it is difficult to understand how the cost of disability assessments can quadruple while thousands of vulnerable people are still waiting for months on end for an assessment, which may not be conducted by assessors with appropriate specialist knowledge of their condition.

“These findings show that the Government is failing on two fronts: providing support to disabled people and offering value for money to the public.”

Dementia and head injury link detected

New research has found that having a head injury can increase the risk of developing degenerative conditions such as dementia later on in life.

The research focuses on protein clumps called ‘amyloid plaques’ which are found in the brains of people with Alzheimer’s disease. The plaques are considered to be one of the causes of the condition.

Previous research has found that these plaques are also present in the brain shortly after a head injury. However, scientists from Imperial College London

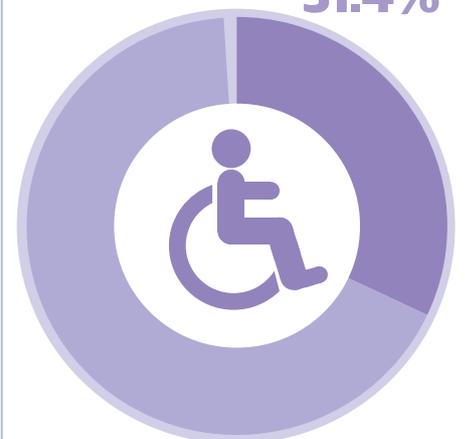
have now discovered that they can be present months or even years after the injury has occurred. It is suggested that the initial injury triggers the production of plaques, which can lead to dementia later on in life.

Although the research is in its early stages, it demonstrates that the potential window of recovery following a head injury can be years rather than just months. As scientists continue to gain a clearer understanding of this, it is hoped that interventions and treatments also continue to improve.



Did you know...

31.4%



A 2014 Headway study found that almost one-third of brain injury survivors (31.4%) lost access to or had benefits payments reduced since 2012.

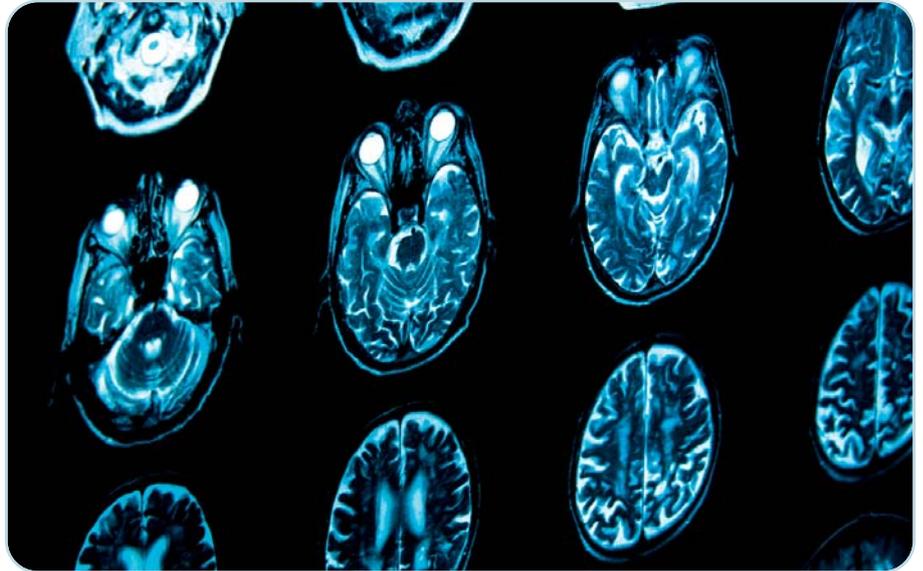
Concussion research welcomed

Headway has welcomed new research into the long-term implications of concussion in sportsmen and women, while warning that more needs to be done to protect those currently playing sport.

The project, *Concussion in Sport*, will build on previous research in this area with an aim of strengthening understanding of the long-term implications of repeated blows to the head.

"This appears to be a significant research project and has to be welcomed," said Luke Griggs, Director of Communications for Headway.

"The results will be eagerly anticipated as they may have far-reaching implications for a number of sports. But with the results not expected for at least three years, it is vital that the focus remains on increasing understanding at grassroots level of the immediate



dangers of continuing to participate in sport following a suspected concussion.

"Everyone involved in sport has a responsibility to ensure that the simple message of *If in doubt, sit it out!* is both understood and acted upon."

With the research project part-funded by sports associations, including the NFL, some experts have raised concerns about undue influence being placed on researchers in order to protect the image of sport.

"Awareness of concussion in sport is now at a level where sports associations have been forced to take action and can no longer ignore the risks," said Luke. "We remain optimistic that the researchers will not be influenced by pressures from those with vested interests.

"Sport has unquestioned benefits for participants and it is important we encourage people to take part. By increasing our understanding of concussion, we can help ensure that those who enjoy sport are better protected."



See also...

"At times I found the movie very difficult to watch"

- Read Angus Swanson's review of the new Will Smith film *Concussion* on page 30

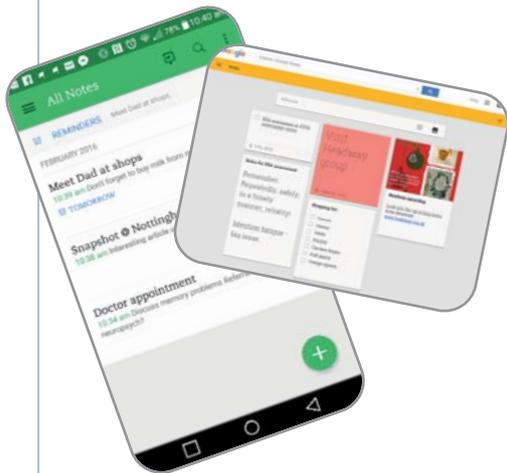
**IF IN DOUBT,
SIT IT OUT!**

electronic memory aids...

Memory loss in a digital age

Memory loss in some shape or form is one of the most commonly experienced effects of brain injury. There's no doubting the devastating impact it can have on individuals, families and relationships.

We live in a digital age, with smartphones said to be used by as many as two thirds of the UK population. The question is,



SpideyMan

"If I put the oven on I have the countdown on in my pocket and it always reminds me if I get engrossed watching Corry!"

how can brain injury survivors with memory problems benefit from this digital evolution?

We invited members of our *HealthUnlocked* community to tell us what they think and share which smartphone or computer-based memory aids they use.

Note-taking apps

Note-taking apps offer a great way to organise lists, thoughts and reminders in one easily accessible place. Most systems will synchronise notes so you can access them on a range of devices.

Evernote

(Available on: PC, Mac, Google Play, iOS App Store, Windows Store, web browsers; www.evernote.com)

Evernote has an easy-to-use interface that allows you to write, search and organise notes that synchronise across all your devices. You can set reminders, attach photos and documents and even write them by hand using a stylus.

Free accounts offer all these features, with paid options adding more storage and features such as passcode locks and searchable attachments.

Google Keep

(Available on: Google Play, iOS App Store, Chrome Store, web browsers; www.google.com/keep)

Google Keep is similar to Evernote in that it lets you write, organise and manage notes with some additional features such as reminders, lists and images.

Whereas Evernote organises notes in 'notebooks' and displays them in a functional list, Keep opts for a tile-based approach that displays your notes up-front on the programme's homepage. This arrangement can quickly become packed full of notes, however Google's excellent search box helps you find things that have dropped off the screen.

OneNote

(Available on: PC, Mac, Google Play, iOS App Store, Windows Store, web browsers; www.onenote.com)

Microsoft's offering is effectively a hybrid of the Evernote and Keep programmes. Notes are organised into notebooks, which are displayed on screen in a similar way to Keep. It works well on desktops but can take some time to get to grips with on the mobile app. OneNote is worth trying but is probably not for everyone.

...electronic memory aids



Did you know...

- Headway's factsheet *Coping with Memory problems: Practical strategies* can be downloaded for free from our website at www.headway.org.uk.



MikeSmila

"My wife often says I live on my phone. True, but my smartphone helps me through life!"

Alternatives

There are plenty of alternative note-taking systems on the Windows Store, App Store and Google Play so it's worth taking time to try a few out before choosing the system that's right for you. Of course, good old-fashioned pen and paper can be a great way to keep notes.

Medication reminders

Taking medication can present a problem for many people with a brain injury. If you have a long list of medicines to take at different times each day, keeping track can be difficult particularly when memory problems play a part. Here we review two of the more popular medication reminder apps, but there are lots of alternatives on the various app stores.

Medisafe

(Available on: Google Play, iOS App Store, Amazon App Store)

Medisafe is packed with features, but the basic medication reminder seems to work well. Each medication can be added individually and the schedule set. It can keep track of how many you have left, which can help you order repeat prescriptions.

At your dose time, an alert appears on your phone with the sound of a pill box shaking. You can also add appointments and doctor details and a wealth of other information to help manage your medical condition.

Dosecast

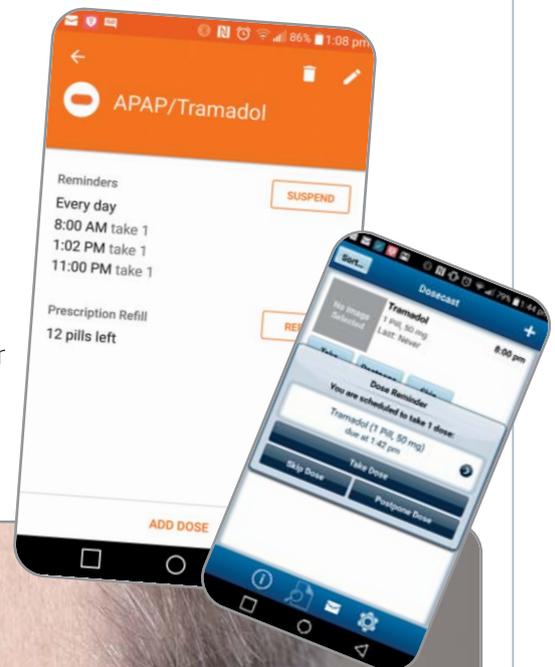
(Available on: Google Play, iOS App Store, Amazon App Store)

Dosecast has a much more functional interface, sacrificing looks for fine control over things like dosages. It will probably take longer to get to grips with, but once a medication schedule is in place it will trigger reminders that can be as subtle or intrusive as you like, and you can take, skip or re-schedule your dose.

Calendars and alarms

Sometimes the simplest things can be the most useful. Most people we spoke to use the built-in calendars and alarms on their phones, tablets and computers to help manage day-to-day planning.

Apple's iOS, Google's Android and Microsoft's Windows all include calendar apps on the phone that synchronise with desktop versions.



Cat3

"PC calendar with alerts; notepad for shopping lists; text alerts for appointments; written reminders placed on hall table."

Join the conversation at ...
headway.healthunlocked.com

Discovering the Americas - *by bike!*

At Headway, we pride ourselves on providing opportunities for everyone to get involved and raise money and awareness for the charity. Whatever your age or ability, there's a challenge for you.

Indeed, for many of us, cycling 50 miles in one day would be a significant challenge - and one that would make us unable to move for several days afterwards!



Danny Beech and Chris Lally conquer the Pan-American Highway

Imagine then how you would cope with cycling the Pan-American Highway, which is more than **14,000 miles** in often brutal conditions over a period of just 130 days.

Well, that's exactly what intrepid university graduates Chris Lally and Danny Beech have just achieved in order to raise money for the charity.

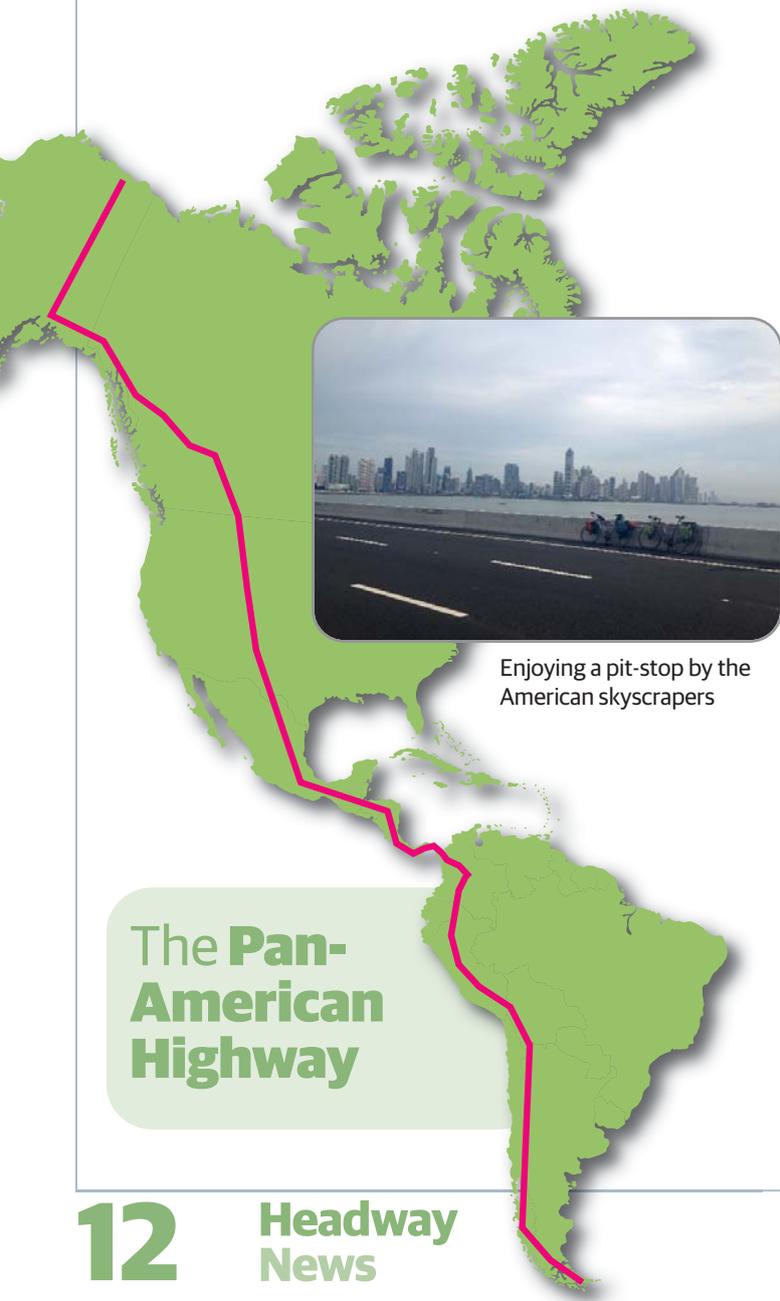
Former St Andrews University students Chris, 22, and Danny, 22, battled through illness, exhaustion, and 95 tyre punctures to complete the Pan-American Highway challenge, which runs from Prudhoe Bay, at the top of Alaska, to Ushuaia, at the bottom of Argentina.

14,099 miles. In 130 days. And yes, you read that correctly!

The expedition, which has so far raised just over £6,500 for Headway, was sponsored by The Alex Richardson Foundation, a fund set up in memory of fellow St Andrews University student Alex, who tragically passed away after sustaining a brain injury in 2009.

1,300 hours in the saddle

The duo kicked off their journey by travelling down the spine of the Rocky Mountains and through the tropical climate of



Enjoying a pit-stop by the American skyscrapers

The **Pan-American Highway**

Central America. They then braved the lifeless Atacama desert before crossing the Andes towards Patagonia, eventually concluding their voyage at the most southern point of Argentina.

During the 130 days they were on the road, Danny and Chris spent a painful 1,300 hours in the saddle, riding for up to 12 hours each day with their speed occasionally topping 45mph. As they cycled through various mountain ranges – from the Rockies in North America to the Andes in South America – they managed to climb to a height of 3,846m.

Exhausting conditions

"What a ridiculous adventure!" said Chris upon completing the challenge. "It is fantastic to have finally reached the end of such an epic quest. At times it has been brutal and exhausting while at others the road took us to places of unimaginable beauty.

"It was very tricky managing our gear and we were forced to leave clothes behind along the way. Texas and the desert areas were tough as we rode against 40-degree hot winds and there were no food or water stops.

The challenge in numbers

14,099 miles
130 days
12 hours cycling per day
111 miles per day
1,300 hours in the saddle



Danny and Chris gear up before hitting the road



Did you know...

- Headway has a huge variety of cycling challenges available to anyone inspired to follow in Danny and Chris's tyre marks. Visit our website to find the right challenge for you!

"However, we are keen cyclists and saw this as an amazing opportunity to push our minds, bodies and bikes to the limit. We wanted to find out what we can achieve and help people in urgent need of support and advice after brain injury in the process.

"Thank you to everyone who believed we could make it for the great charity Headway and supported us throughout our journey!"

World record

Incredibly, medical graduate Danny and physics graduate Chris not only completed the epic challenge, but came within just five days of beating the existing world record of 125 days to cycle the entire length of the treacherous route.

"We were on track to beat the record but Chris drank some impure water while we were travelling across Canada," Danny recalled. "He took seriously ill and we had to find a hospital as a matter of urgency. Thankfully, he recovered quite quickly."

But Chris was not the only one to face health complications while on the road. Danny continued: "I also suffered my fair share of illness! I was badly stung by a creature while crossing a desert in Peru and my face began to swell up.

"Despite missing out on the world record, the experience has had an enormous impact upon both our lives. We are still recruiting support to reach our ambitious target of £14,000 for Headway, which works out at roughly £1 per mile and has been a fantastic motivator along the way."



If you think Danny and Chris's incredible efforts are worthy of support, please visit www.justgiving.com/Danny-Beech1

Who's your #HeadwayHero?
Tell us on [f](#) or [t](#)



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We are active supporters of Headway. Kim Smerdon, head of our Personal Injury team, is a Trustee of Headway Thames Valley.

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Chris Malpus - Lily's father

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‘We cried with pride when we read Gary’s Will’

Gary Winters’ brain injury dramatically altered the course of his life at just 30 years of age. But with his family’s love and support, he adapted to life after brain injury before sadly passing away 19 years later.

When his family came to read his Will, they were given a comforting reminder of Gary’s desire to help others.

“Following his brain injury, Gary’s placid, unassuming personality vanished,” said Gary’s mum, Sarah.

“In its place, a forthright, determined and angry young man had arrived in our family and we had been left to navigate through life after brain injury on our own.

“It took a very long time for me to come to terms with the feeling that I had lost the son I knew, but we all began to accept and understand the new, unpredictable but caring version of Gary that had emerged after brain injury.

“His great sense of humour was invaluable to us all, especially when tackling his outbursts as a result of his injury.”

Brain injury also left Gary with short-term memory problems and weakness down the left-hand side of his body.

“Gary’s new limitations created challenges for all of us,” Sarah continued.

“I had so many concerns about Gary’s future and so we turned to Headway UK for advice. The charity’s directory of specialist solicitors helped us find an appropriate legal deputy who stood side-by-side with us throughout his long rehabilitation and helped him regain his independence.”

As part of his rehabilitation, Gary turned his hand to photography and even received an award for his work.

“Gary’s sister Jackie treasures the photos he took at her wedding,” said Sarah. “He even returned to Solihull College where he graduated with a HNC qualification in photography.”

After living independently in his own home for 11 years, Gary tragically passed away in 2014.

“It was a very difficult time for us,” said Sarah, “We took enormous comfort from finding out that Gary had left a gift in his Will to Headway in order to help people like himself lead better lives after brain injury.

“We cried with pride when we read Gary’s Will. We had forgotten just how much he wanted to help people. Seeing Headway’s name alongside close family members was a stark reminder of how, even at the very end, selflessly supporting others was close to Gary’s heart.

“It is through this touching act of kindness we know that Gary’s legacy will live on.”



Gary celebrates his graduation with mum Sarah (left) and sister Jackie



Leaving a gift in your Will

Making a Will is vital to securing the future of your family and the causes that are close to your heart, yet many of us often shy away from thinking about the unthinkable.

That is why Headway UK has put together a simple advice pack for anyone wishing to leave a lasting legacy by pledging a gift to Headway.



To download your Will Planner, please visit:

www.headway.org.uk/donate/a-gift-in-your-will

Celebs happy to play supporting role to *real stars of the*



Who's the star? Steven Lomas grabs a photo with Marc Almond

Headway Annual Awards 2015
**The Alex Richardson
Achiever of the Year Award**
(sponsored by Slater & Gordon)

Steven Lomas

Headway Stockport and South
Manchester

Finalists

Jeff Mayle

Headway Cardiff

Jamie McKechnie

Headway SELNWK

A host of special guests from the worlds of sport, music and television gathered at the 2015 Headway Annual Awards in December. But while the celebs added to the sense of occasion, the real stars of the show were the 12 incredible finalists.

From brain injury survivors who have defied the odds, to carers showing immense strength to support their loved ones; from volunteers who have dedicated their lives to helping others, to those who have gone to extraordinary lengths to support Headway, this year's finalists ensured the event was a moving celebration of what can be achieved after brain injury.

Jeff Mayle, a finalist in The Alex Richardson Achiever of the Year Award category, particularly enjoyed the day: "It was a very moving day and I was made to feel very special by all Headway staff and supporters."

Jeff was just 17 years old when a skateboarding accident in 1992 left him

in a coma with a traumatic brain injury. He's fought an arduous battle to rebuild his life, with support from **Headway Cardiff** and his loving family, who themselves are no strangers to the Headway Annual Awards ceremony.

In 2013, Jeff's father, Pete, was a finalist in the Stephen McAleese Outstanding Contribution to Headway category after providing 20 years of voluntary support to Headway Cardiff.

Jeff added: "Standing on the stage where my father stood two years previously to celebrate his 'outstanding contribution' to Headway was a very proud and important moment for me."



The Alex Richardson Achiever of the Year Award

Sponsored by Slater & Gordon Lawyers

Steven Lomas, from Headway Stockport and South Manchester, was recognised for showing incredible determination as he battled back from a severe brain injury sustained in a car accident in 2004 that left him in a coma for six weeks. Overcoming issues including fatigue and difficulty controlling his emotions, Steven last year achieved a first class degree in Professional Broadcasting Techniques by making himself the focus of a documentary.



Captive audience: Alan Smith and Tom Macleod

show!



Johnson Beharry VC with his wife Mallissa

Pete said: "We were all extremely proud watching Jeff receive his well-deserved certificate. Not everybody realises just how much effort Jeff puts into his daily life."

Ellen McKechnie was similarly proud, having nominated her husband Jamie for the Alex Richardson Achiever of the Year Award. With the ongoing support of **Headway South East London North West Kent**, Jamie has battled back from a near-fatal TBI sustained in an unprovoked attack in 2011.

The BMX-bike fanatic had two goals: to one day get back in the bike-saddle and to walk unaided down the aisle to marry his fiancée, Ellen. He has since achieved both targets.

Ellen said: "What an amazing, emotional day! I am so proud of my wonderful husband Jamie and everything he has

achieved to rebuild his life and reach this stage."

But you didn't need to be a parent or partner to be proud! With all the finalists representing Headway groups and branches, fellow members, volunteers, and carers across the country shared in the joy of seeing their friends on stage.

Janet Staff, Chair of Headway Lancaster and Morecambe Bay, said: "What an incredible event! Seven of us attended the luncheon to cheer on Carer of the Year finalist Molly Veale.

"It was wonderful to see her recognised for being such a determined and fiercely loving life-coach for her husband Warren."



A proud Charlie Korving (centre) is flanked by husband Jake and mum Hilary Ashton.



Charlie Korving
(@dorsetcharlie):

Really chuffed and gobsmacked to win national Carer of the Year #HeadwayAwards



The champagne reception was kindly sponsored by Irwin Mitchell Solicitors

Headway Annual Awards 2015

Carer of the Year

(sponsored by Withy King)

Charlie Korving

Headway Dorset

Finalists

Kathryn Edgington

Headway South Staffordshire

Molly Veale

Headway Lancaster and

Morecombe Bay



Carer of the Year

Sponsored by Withy King Solicitors

Headway Dorset's "Warrior Wife" **Charlie Korving** was delighted to be crowned Carer of the Year. When Charlie's husband Jake was knocked off his bike in October 2011, he sustained a brain injury that caused him to forget Charlie's name, the couple's relationship, and their wedding day.

Charlie stayed strong and fought hard to ensure Jake received the best possible care throughout a long and challenging journey to recovery.

With support from Headway Dorset, she put her life and dream job on hold to provide the 24-hour care Jake needed. Three years later, the couple renewed their wedding vows in a second ceremony in New York.



Headway Annual Awards 2015...



only girl

(@onlygirlmusic):

Jamie @Ghetto_BMX at

@HeadwayUK awards.

An amazing emotional day!

#HeadwayAwards

#HeadwayHeroes #braininjury



Volunteer of the Year Gill Leandro receives her award from James Cracknell

Headway Annual Awards 2015

Volunteer of the Year

(sponsored by
Anthony Gold Solicitors)

Gill Leandro

Headway East Kent

Finalists

Humphry Adair

Headway Suffolk

Jean Martin Savage

Headway Darlington
and District

Celebrations

"The awards luncheon is such a wonderful celebration of what can be achieved after brain injury," said Jo Plant, Director of Fundraising at Headway.

"The atmosphere is so uplifting, helped somewhat by the stunning surroundings of The Dorchester Hotel's majestic ballroom and flutes of champagne to greet the guests.

"From the feedback we've received from finalists and guests alike, this year's event was one of the most memorable to date. The presence of a number of our high-profile supporters and a selection of moving – and in some cases funny – video messages of support for the finalists helped, but ultimately it was the incredible finalists who make this event what it is."

Among the famous faces in attendance were Headway Vice President **James Cracknell**, Special Ambassador **Johnson Beharry VC**, and former England and Arsenal footballer **Alan Smith**.

Sky newsreader and sports presenter **Tom Macleod** was back by popular demand to host the ceremony, while TV antiques expert **Eric Knowles** once again guided the audience for the Headway auction, which saw a signed Arsenal shirt fetch £1,500 for the charity.

Legendary pop icon **Marc Almond**, who sustained a brain injury in 2004, also delighted guests by making an appearance and joining in with the celebrations, sportingly taking



Volunteer of the Year

Sponsored by Anthony Gold Solicitors

Charity stalwart **Gill Leandro** claimed the title of Volunteer of the Year after devoting 13 years to fundraising and supporting families affected by brain injury at **Headway West Kent**.

When Gill retired in 2002, she began providing one-to-one maths support sessions for Headway members and soon became a regular volunteer at the local group.

For the past 13 years, she has hosted five-course meals for members, offering her home for weekly woodwork sessions, offering a 'buddy service' to members and raising thousands of pounds for Headway West Kent.

AnthonyGold

...Headway Annual Awards 2015



Missed out? Watch the video of the event at www.youtube.com/HeadwayUK or scan the QR code above

photographs with his fans and Headway supporters.

Awareness

While the awards programme enables the charity to acknowledge the incredible achievements of brain injury survivors and the outstanding contributions of those working tirelessly to support them, it also provides an opportunity to raise the profile of Headway and the work of groups and branches.

This year, a record total of more than 100 pieces of national and local press coverage was secured. The mammoth montage included a double-page spread in the centre pages of the *Daily Mirror*, three television interviews (including both BBC and ITV local evening news bulletins), national consumer magazine features in *Bella* and *Real People*, and a host of local newspaper and radio interviews!

Privilege

Peter McCabe, Chief Executive of Headway, said: "It was an absolute privilege to celebrate the achievements of such determined, special people who represent thousands of others across the UK working hard to improve life after brain injury.



Peter Shaw (left) with proud son Neal

"It's also hugely gratifying to see so many media outlets recognise our finalists. Their achievements and hard work deserve public attention, while the boost to the local and national profile of the charity is also very welcome.

"For many of the charity's members and supporters across the country, the Headway Annual Awards event is the highlight of the year – and this year's event was no exception. My thanks and congratulations to all our wonderful finalists and those who nominated them."



The Stephen McAleese Outstanding Contribution to Headway Award Sponsored by No 5 Chambers

Peter Shaw devoted his national award to the members of **Headway North Derbyshire** who he has spent the past 15 years supporting alongside campaigning for better local brain injury services. After Peter's son Neal sustained a brain injury in a road traffic accident in 1999, Peter became a key member – and eventually Chair – of Headway in Chesterfield. Thanks to Peter's sterling work spending countless hours organising fundraising events, campaigning and supporting members, the branch developed into Headway North Derbyshire in 2007 with Peter still giving his time and energy as Chair of the group.



RECYCLINGme

"I cannot remember the moments leading up to the accident or indeed the four months afterwards. I never thought that something like this could happen to me."

Kate Bosley and her husband **John**, from Maidstone in Kent, had always shared a passion for cycling. They rode together every week and even went on cycling holidays.

It was on one such trip to Tenerife in 2013 that the lives of Kate, John and their children changed forever.

John's story

"It was day two of our cycle-training camp," John recalled. "We were returning to the hotel having cycled to Puerto de Santiago, which included a 20km climb up to Santiago del Teide.

"There was a long and fast descent and, fairly quickly, the group split as some of us went ahead learning how to take bends safely downhill. A small group of us stopped to wait for others to catch up. We waited, and waited, and eventually decided to continue on in case they'd taken a different route.

"We had been back at the hotel for nearly an hour before a couple of other riders joined us, saying they thought there'd been a puncture. That is when

we heard ambulances in the distance. Someone's phone rang. A shocked facial expression – was that a glance at me?

Then I was passed the phone. "Kate's party of cyclists had been involved in a pile-up, and even today no one knows the cause. As Kate was sitting upright, the team leader initially helped another cyclist who had clearly suffered broken bones.

"When we arrived at the scene, the road had been closed off and, half-way down, there was an ambulance. Beside it, Kate's bike stood against a fence – one shoe still attached. A few of her belongings were on the road, including her smashed cycling goggles.

"One of the leaders, Jeanette, drove me to the hotel to collect my things and then straight to Hospital de la Candelaria, in Santa Cruz, at the other end of the island. I sat nervously in silence with a sense of guilt that I had yet again cycled on ahead without waiting for Kate.

"I waited for hours in an unpleasantly busy A&E before a doctor told me: "I am sorry, but it is very bad."

Kate's story

"I cannot remember the moments leading up to the accident or indeed the four months afterwards," said Kate, who is the former CEO at Heart of Kent Hospice.



Kate and John attempt to conquer a steep climb

Kate and John Bosley in Wales



...My Story



"Before the accident, I would never have dreamed that something like this could happen to me. John and I have always been keen and competent cyclists who would ride our bikes every week in England.

"It was a very scary experience for John. While I was in a coma, he was the one left to face the unknown in a foreign country. If the complex and uncertain nature of brain injury wasn't enough to deal with, John soon found the language barrier an enormous challenge. He struggled to translate the stream of medical jargon as the Spanish doctors explained that I needed life-saving brain surgery."

The couple's youngest daughter, Sarah, was just 16 years old at the time and had been on a school trip abroad when news reached home of her mother's accident.

It was not until Sarah got off the coach upon her return to England that she was greeted with the terrible news by her sister Charlotte.

Having been told by John to expect the worst, the children flew out to Tenerife to be with their mother.

'No memory'

"The day John took the decision to fly home with Sarah so she could sit her GCSEs was the day I finally began to show signs of regaining consciousness," said Kate.

"Improvement was slow, but I think my family were just so grateful that I was alive. Even now, I have absolutely no memory of the four months around the time of my accident.

"At best, there are some blurry flashbacks of my surroundings in the Tenerife hospital with the unsettling feeling that I'd been there a long time. However, I've had to rely upon the accounts of my husband and children to piece together the upsetting series of events."

Kate was placed on a medical flight back to England where she remained at a hospital in Maidstone for seven weeks, before being transferred to a rehabilitation centre in Sevenoaks, Kent, to begin a lengthy road to recovery.

Forgotten Christmas

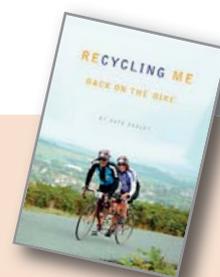
Kate said: "Although I made the difficult decision to step down from my job following the accident, my brain injury has, in many ways, been harder for my family than for me.

"The strange thing is that I cannot remember the first Christmas Day after sustaining my brain injury. I had to be reminded of the day with prompts and photographs. According to family, we had a lovely meal together with friends and it was quite a special day. Thankfully, I have now been able to rebuild my bank of memories."

ReCycling Me: Back on the Bike

One year on from her ordeal, Kate decided to document her recovery in a novel. *ReCycling Me: Back on the Bike* innovatively tracks Kate's recovery from brain injury from each family member's perspective. Kate added: "I am delighted to say that I am now back in the saddle and more committed than ever before to raise awareness of the importance of cycle helmets.

"Whether you are completing a 26-mile fundraiser or just popping to the local shops - **wear a helmet!** It might just save your life."



You can find out more about Kate's book *ReCycling Me: Back on the Bike* by visiting the Headway website

Thank you!...



Rugby club helps Headway tackle brain injury

Rugby club bosses in Darlington have shown real team spirit by supporting Headway Darlington and District to raise the profile of brain injury and the work of the charity.

The announcement of the partnership with local rugby union club Mowden Park RFC is a major fillip for the charity, which only achieved group status last year. In addition to hosting fundraising events,

Mowden Park has also invited Headway Darlington and District to base itself at the club's stadium, the Northern Echo Arena.

Collaborative events to raise funds and awareness of brain injury are already underway at the sports stadium, including cycling days organised by Gateway Wheelers, a group that enables people with disabilities to get active using a range of adapted bikes.

"Our new premises and partnership with Mowden Park marks an exciting chapter for everyone involved with our group," said Nicola Hughes, Chair of Headway Darlington and District.

"When we received our charitable status last year we decided to partner with an organisation that has a community footprint and also an understanding of Headway's work and values.

"Concussion in sport is taken very seriously by the club and Mowden Park has a

progressive approach to its extensive community work. We are very grateful and pleased to be part of the Mowden family."

In addition to giving the local Headway group its first real base, the partnership has also seen the charity begin work with the Mowden Park Community Education Schemes to create a concussion-focused programme. The new curriculum will include an initiative to increase awareness about the importance of identifying and treating concussion within sport.

Mowden Park Managing Director, Lee Rust, said: "We are delighted to have Headway Darlington and District based at the arena as it is an organisation that we are proud to be associated with and to support.

"Headway's decision is a testament to the quality of the facility and it marks a further step towards our collective goal of creating a community hub which benefits the town and region."

Celeb's charitable efforts are certainly not *pointless*

The wheels are in motion for Headway Dumfries and Galloway after a motor racing star agreed to become the local group's first ever Patron.

Ex-Formula One driver and triple Le Mans winner Allan McNish has helped the Headway group into top gear by pledging his ongoing support to the charity. And he quickly found an opportunity to demonstrate that support by appearing on popular television game show, *Pointless Celebrities*.

Dumfries-born Allan appeared on the show with his friend Claire Williams, the daughter of Formula One's Sir Frank Williams, selecting Headway Dumfries and Galloway as the duo's chosen charity.

The pair made it all the way to the final where they were unfortunately unable to find a 'pointless' answer on the show. Regardless, they still managed to raise £250 for the group, while boosting the UK-wide profile of Headway.

In 2011, Allan was himself involved in a horrific car accident while racing but thankfully walked away unhurt. Nonetheless, the F1 champion witnesses head injuries and concussion among his fellow racers on a regular basis and he has shown particular interest in Headway Dumfries and Galloway's campaign to prevent accidents on rural roads.

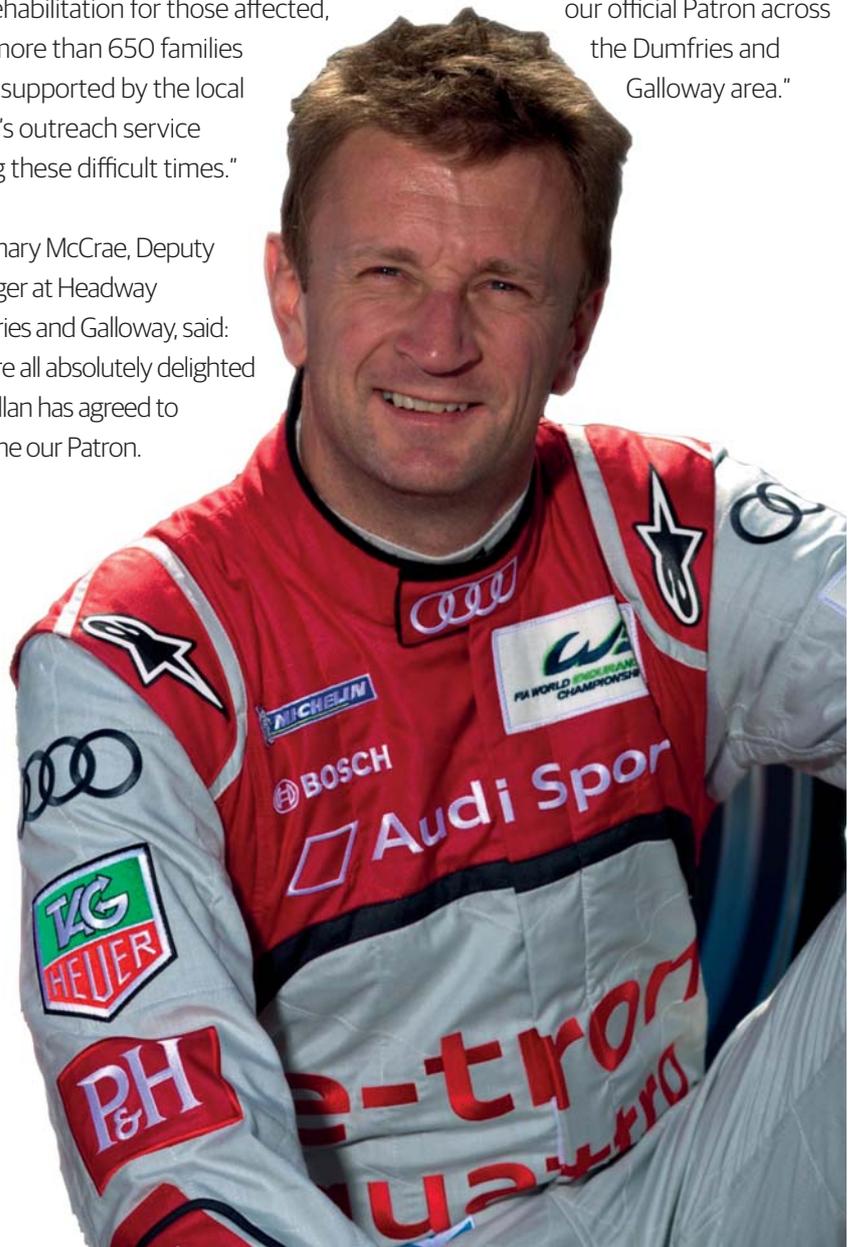
"I am proud to be named a Patron of Headway Dumfries and Galloway," said Allan.

"I know personally the trauma of head injuries and the impact they often have upon the related families. Headway provides a much-needed service for the local community in education, support and rehabilitation for those affected, with more than 650 families being supported by the local group's outreach service during these difficult times."

Rosemary McCrae, Deputy Manager at Headway Dumfries and Galloway, said: "We are all absolutely delighted that Allan has agreed to become our Patron.

As well as being born and bred in Dumfries, safety to prevent head injury has always been – and indeed continues to be – a key priority for Allan throughout his racing career.

"Our 'Prevention and Safety' campaign planned for 2016 will hopefully be greatly enhanced through Allan's role as our official Patron across the Dumfries and Galloway area."



Ex-Formula One driver and Headway Dumfries and Galloway patron, Allan McNish

Thank you!...

Olympian opens new gym



Gail Emms watches Josey Tomkins try out the new equipment

Headway Cambridgeshire has officially opened its new gym in style, thanks to British Olympic badminton hero Gail Emms.

The former World Champion and winner of the silver medal in the Athens Olympic Games, where she played with mixed doubles partner Nathan Robertson, officially opened the new facility before sharing some top fitness tips with service users.

The gym, based in the group's Peterborough hub, complements the charity's fitness facilities in its Cambridge centre and ensures more members now have access to supervised physical activities as part of their rehabilitation programmes.

As well as being an active supporter of Headway Cambridgeshire, Gail has a passion for improving fitness levels in the community.

"Making fitness available to those who have lost it through accidents and illness is vital," said Gail. "I am delighted to be opening this new facility and hope that over the months and years to come many people use this space as part of their journey towards rehabilitation."

Helen McMenamin-Smith, a Headway Cambridgeshire client who uses the gym at Fulbourn, Cambridge, said: "Before I started working at the gym under the guidance of a qualified instructor, I could barely walk to the end of my road. I have now got back

Grubs up!

Strong-stomached students from Newcastle have raised more than £10,000 for Headway by hosting a series of gruesome 'bush-tucker' challenges at their school.

Year 12 pupil Callum Wilson organised the event, which was inspired by the hit TV programme *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!*, after naming Headway as Whickham School's chosen charity for its annual fundraising week. Callum, 17 and from Whickham, near Newcastle, nominated Headway to thank the

charity for supporting his father after he sustained a traumatic brain injury.

With help from his friend Joanna Scott, Callum organised a series of activities ranging from dance competitions in the school yard, sponsored head-shaves and bake sales, to variety shows and a grand *X Factor*-themed finale to the fundraising festivities.

The main event, a series of 'bush-tucker' challenges, saw the students cooking up numerous disgusting dishes for the school's teachers to eat, with daring participants even trying their hand at eating a water bug insect.

Ingredients for the stomach-churning challenge were sourced from *Crunchy Critters*, a supplier of edible insects in



Wickham School friends Harry Brodie, Lauren Bramwell, Dean Hanvey, Callum Wilson and Megan Gates organised the charity bush-tucker challenges

both my physical fitness and my confidence."

Austin Willett, Chief Executive of Headway Cambridgeshire says: "I am delighted to say that in addition to the services we already provide, such as Occupational Therapy and Life Skills, we can now add a state of the art gym which will help people to recover their strength and work on regaining their mobility following brain injury.

"We are very grateful Gail could find the time to officially open our new gym. Her enthusiasm is infectious and I know our clients will take a lot of inspiration from meeting her."

Lincolnshire. The menu included sago worms with cheese and pickle, garlic bread with mealworms and custard mixed with fish eyes.

Pupils paid 50p to nominate a teacher to take on the challenge or 10p to nominate a fellow student.

"The original idea was to get our teachers to eat unconventional food mixtures, such as sardines and custard," said Callum. "We thought it would be good to go a step further and try and get some bugs! Funds raised will go towards running Headway activities for brain injury survivors and their families across the North East of England."

In February 2016, Callum was invited to attend Headway's *Understanding Brain*

Hats off to funders!

Two major grants from the Big Lottery Fund and the Welsh Government are set to give significant boosts to the charity's HATS project and its support services in Wales respectively.

Funding from the Big Lottery Fund will enable the charity to double the number of Headway Acute Trauma Support (HATS) nurses providing invaluable support to families whose loved ones are receiving acute care following brain injury.

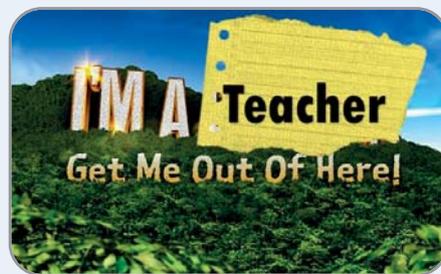
In addition, a manager will be appointed to oversee the continued development and future expansion of the project.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Meanwhile, the Welsh Government has provided a grant of £200,000 to increase awareness of brain injury in Wales, and provide additional services in rural locations.

The three-year project will see Headway lead a number of initiatives with support from the Child Brain Injury Trust, including the opening of a series of 'neuro cafes'. Serving as social hubs, the 'neuro cafes' will offer people affected by brain injury and other neurological conditions a chance to socialise with others similarly affected, and receive peer support and information.



Injury course in Newcastle to develop his insight into managing life challenges after brain injury.

"I don't know what we would have done without Headway," said Callum.

"Since sustaining his brain injury, my dad suffers from chronic migraines and speech problems. Headway has provided our entire family with loads of support and I want to give something back to the charity's work across the region to say 'thank you' for all their help."

"It is hard to overestimate the importance of these two grants," said Brian Clingan, Director of Services at Headway. "We are delighted and extremely grateful that the Big Lottery has recognised the importance of the HATS scheme and the lifeline it offers families in urgent need of support following a brain injury.

"Similarly, our sincere thanks go to the Welsh Government for backing our vision to reach out to more people in the country who are currently trying to cope with the effects of brain injury with little or no support."



LOTTERY FUNDED

Thank you!...

Raise a glass to legal eagles *set to prove* they're

Stand-up comedy, a 24-hour bike ride, and a five-a-side football tournament all form part of the fundraising plans for barristers chambers **St John's Buildings (SJB)** after the firm accepted a **Headway Challenge Baton**.

Thankfully, two other firms joining SJB in pledging their support to Headway in 2016 are ideally placed to not only match the firm's fundraising efforts but also provide some professional expertise. While fellow 2016 baton holder **Majestic Wine** could perhaps offer the budding comedians some

'Dutch courage', the more active fundraisers may wish to check out the policies on offer from leading international sports insurance company **Sportscover**.

"We are thrilled to have three such well-established organisations take on Challenge Batons this year," said Jo Plant, Director of Fundraising at Headway.

"All three firms have different reasons for supporting Headway, and all three are excellent partners for the charity.

"The enthusiasm already shown by the teams is tremendously exciting. We can't wait to support them all in their various challenges."



SJB is currently finalising its packed fundraising calendar for 2016. QCs Sally Harrison and Fran Heaton have bravely volunteered to take part in the comedy night, while the firm is expecting a huge participation in the Great Manchester Run and the Three Peaks Challenge.

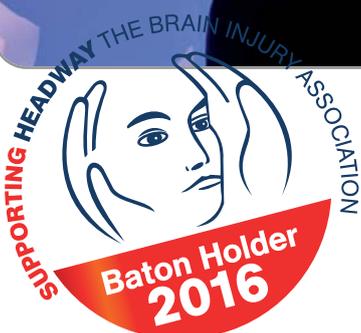
Head of Chambers Sally Harrison QC commented: "We are really looking forward to working in partnership with the team at Headway, not just to raise vital funds but also to increase awareness and understanding of the essential work they do throughout the country.

"Taking up the Headway Baton is an exciting challenge for us - and we can't wait to get started."

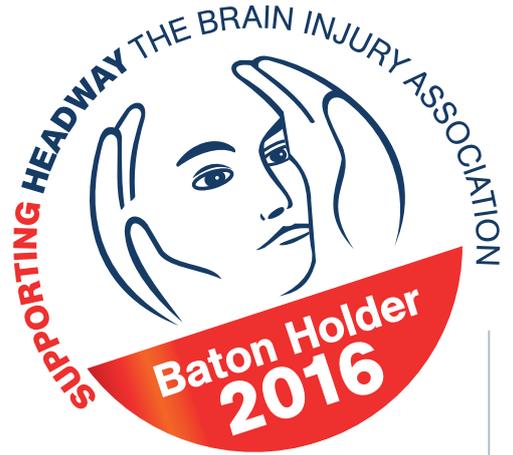
The money raised by St John's Buildings will be split between Headway UK and Headway Lancaster and Morecombe Bay.



Johnson Beharry with baton holder Chris Ronan, St Johns Buildings



...Thank you!



top sports!



Headway was nominated for consideration as Majestic Wine's Charity of the Year by Marketing Manager Celia Bryan-Brown.

"In May last year, my step-father suffered a brain haemorrhage," explained Celia. "This is the first experience our family has had of brain injury and it's been overwhelming at times - particularly for my mother.

"When my step-father was in hospital, some of the nurses introduced us to Headway. They were actually preparing to take part in a marathon to raise money for the charity.

"I too wanted to support the charity, and nominating Headway to be the Majestic Wine Charity of the Year was a perfect opportunity to do so.

"I'm touched my colleagues chose to vote for Headway and I hope the money we raise will support its vital services, particularly those designed to support families, such as the Emergency Fund, HATS nurses, and the booklets and factsheets."

Collection tins are already in stores across the country, while fun-runs, raffles and promotions are also being planned. There is even an opportunity

for Headway groups and branches to get involved by hosting local wine-tasting events.

With the world of sport increasingly turning its attention to the challenge of managing the short and long-term implications of concussion, Sportscover hopes its partnership with Headway will help to keep momentum behind the charity's *If in doubt, sit it out!* campaign.



Martin Crannis, Chief Executive of Sportscover Europe, announced the partnership at the company's Christmas broker lunch, which was attended by special guests including television presenter John Inverdale and England rugby union player Danny Care. Martin then accepted a Headway Challenge Baton at the Headway Annual Awards luncheon in December, signalling a year of fundraising activities at the firm.

"We have a long tradition of supporting charities linked to sport," said Martin.

"This year, we're focusing on one particular area. Many believe that concussion is sport's 'smoking time bomb'. Participation in sport is vital and, as an industry, we do not want to put people off from playing.

"It is vital, however, that more is done to ensure people are properly protected when playing sport. We cannot eliminate all the risks and accidents do happen. That's where insurance comes in, but also better awareness and management of concussion in order to prevent minor head injuries having more serious consequences.

Sportscover has already kicked-off its fundraising efforts, with a £1,000 donation to the charity from fundraising and a charity auction at the firm's Christmas lunch, while a rugby ball signed by John Inverdale and Danny Care raised an additional £200 at the Headway Annual Awards luncheon.



The Sportscover interview



#HeadwayHeroes

Souper fundraisers rally for charity

The devoted brother of a woman who remains in a vegetative state has put his vintage wheels in motion to raise £7,000 for Headway.

Car fanatic Chris Campbell, from London, and his sons Jamie and Stephen took part in the 2015 Motoscape Banger Rally to generate awareness of Headway after Chris's sister Rosemary sustained an anoxic brain injury following a heart attack.

The rally saw 48 teams drive from London to Venice using cars that had to be more than 20 years old and/or cost less than £333 to buy.

Chris's team, who dubbed themselves Campbell's Soupermen, chose a 27-year-old Ford Granada Scorpio for the challenge, which they repainted and suitably renamed The Campbell's Soupercar.

The rally took place over five days with all teams taking the same route and attempting to complete a number of daily challenges for points.

Each morning there was a daily briefing at 07:45 hours when the challenges would be set. It was then imperative to check in with the organisers by 19:00 the same day.

"Although not an official challenge, one of our goals was to give the car a good trashing around the Nurburgring race track," said Chris.



The Campbell's car before its souper transformation...



...and after!



In May 2009, 43-year-old Rosemary Baker was found unconscious by her husband Phil after suffering a sudden heart attack at their home in Southampton.

Rosemary's brain was deprived of oxygen while she was unconscious, causing severe anoxic brain injury. Almost seven years later, Rosemary remains in a persistent vegetative state and continues to receive 24-hour care at a neurological rehabilitation centre near Salisbury.

Rosemary's condition inspired her brother Chris to take action and raise awareness of how serious brain injury can affect the lives of entire families.



For more information on prolonged disorders of consciousness, visit www.headway.org.uk or www.healthtalk.org (search for the Family Experiences of Vegetative and Minimally Conscious States section). Alternatively, for support or signposting, call or email the helpline on 0808 800 2244 or helpline@headway.org.uk.

"As we drove through the Ardennes forest admiring the view, a rare look in the rear view mirror revealed the depressing site of us leaving a smoke trail behind the car! This became a full smoke screen when going uphill.

"With some trepidation we embarked on the next leg of our journey and somehow made it to the finish.

Having travelled 1,300 miles through seven European countries in five days and completed daily challenges to score points for the competition, the Soupermen were awarded second place as they arrived in Venice.

"Unfortunately, however, our car suffered terminal gearbox failure and had to be towed away and scrapped at the end of the rally!"

"Our team's aim was to introduce Headway to people who had never heard of the charity before. Rosemary had been a fit, active and healthy executive before her brain injury.

"The Campbell family will remain committed to promoting Headway because what happened to Rosemary could happen to anyone, at any time."



The Soupercar's sad demise

CONCUSSION

film hits home

Concussion, starring Will Smith, opened in UK cinemas on 12 February, bringing the topic of head injuries in sport onto the big screen.

The film is based on the real-life story and work of neuropathologist Dr Bennet Omalu (Smith) as he battled to persuade the world of American Football of the dangers of concussion in sport.



We asked brain injury survivor **Angus Swanson**, who has experienced

the lasting effects of concussion, to review the film.



When former Pittsburgh Steelers' centre-field Mike Webster is found dead in 2002, Bennet Omalu handles Webster's autopsy and discovers the footballer sustained – and most likely died of – severe brain injury caused by repeated blows to the head.

Will Smith (Omalu) does a very good job of portraying the impassioned feelings of absolute frustration when trying to

get people to understand what 'brain injury' means.

The audience is taken on an intense journey as we witness a hardworking doctor, who is so emotionally invested in his patients, becoming increasingly desperate to make the NFL care about the real dangers posed by sports concussions if they go untreated.

Portrayal of brain injury

At times I found the movie very difficult to watch. There is a moment in the film when Mike Webster goes home to Wales as he is dying and suffering greatly from the long-term impact of his repeated concussions.

Returning home to my family in Wales when the effects of my brain injury became too much to handle has always been my 'go to' safe place – the parallel with Mike really struck a chord with me and it hit home how serious head injury in sport can be.

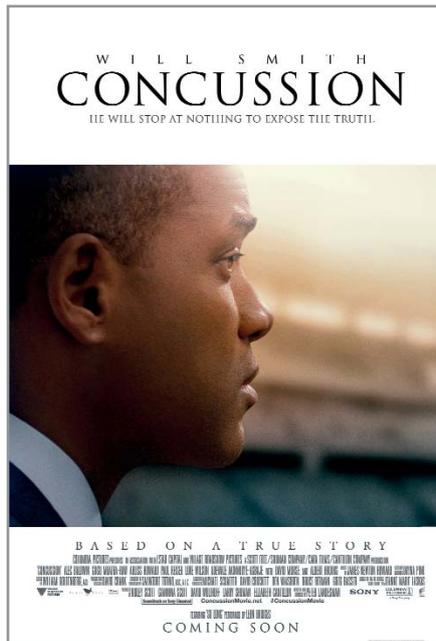


NFL: then and now

Concussion brings to life a very different era and culture of football. The film's scathing portrayal of the NFL exposes a damaging reluctance to change that, thankfully, does not reflect the evolved and concussion-aware NFL we know today.

The care taken to protect players at this season's Six Nations rugby matches shows how far attitudes towards safety have come since the days when sports committees were determined to do "whatever it takes to keep them (players) in the game."

I really believe that Concussion can make a real difference to the wellbeing of sportsmen both in the US and UK,



as such films valuably highlight the often devastating consequences of head injury and refresh the message – if in doubt, sit it out.



Angus Swanson, 20 and from Monmouthshire

University student Angus Swanson had been playing rugby for the King's College University team in London when he suffered a blow to the head during a tackle. He collapsed at the side of the pitch and was left with a near-fatal brain injury. Angus now supports Headway's 'If in doubt, sit it out' sports concussion campaign. Read Angus's full story by visiting the Headway website.

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For specialist advice on all personal injury and clinical negligence claims, speak to one of the UK's leading law firms.

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www.freeths.co.uk



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