

Winter 2020

Headway News



The magazine of Headway - the brain injury association

*“My memories,
experiences, skills
and abilities,
all gone.”*

**MEMORY
LOSS**

A campaign to remember



**ABI Week
roundup**

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Unique Care Provider – Helping you to take control of your loved one's trust fund.



At Unique Care Provider we guide our clients through every aspect of running their own support team, to provide appropriate and specialist care, eliminating dependence on costly solicitors. We work with families of spinal and brain injury survivors with complex physical and cognitive impairment, delivering a wide range of services that would otherwise need to be completed by a legal firm or case management company at large cost to the Trust Fund. We are also fully accredited by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

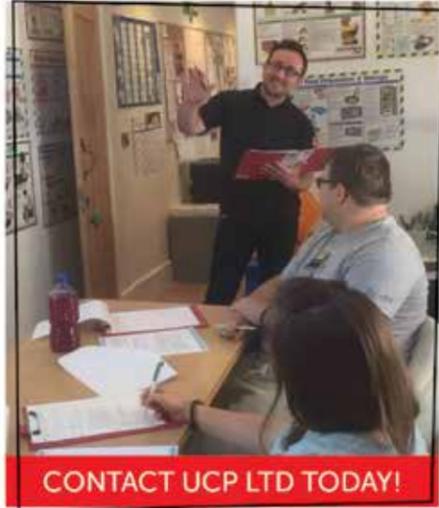
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Toni Mousley
Owner of UCP



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Welcome

Welcome to the winter edition of Headway News.

As we come to the end of this extraordinary year, I find myself reflecting on how much has changed since the spring.

Make no mistake: the financial impact of Covid-19 threatens our very existence. We have been compelled to make some very difficult decisions to reduce expenditure, ensuring that we protect our frontline services as far as possible.

I would like to thank my colleagues for the extraordinary lengths they are going to under such difficult circumstances. We are all working harder and longer to keep the wheels turning, and we will continue to do so to ensure brain injury survivors and their families are not left without support.

But at times it has felt as if it's one step forward and two steps back; the second national lockdown is set to significantly increase the deficit we are facing this year, eating further into the charity's reserves.

And so I make no apology for asking those who are in a position to do so to consider helping Headway in its time of need by making a donation to the charity's survival appeal via www.headway.org.uk/donate.

The challenges we are facing as a charity as a result of coronavirus cannot be understated, but neither can our continued commitment to supporting those affected by brain injury.

As uncertain and unsettling times look set to continue, it may seem as if help and support is further from reach. I want to reassure survivors and families that the help and support they need is never further than a click, an email or a phone call away.

Our nurse-led, freephone helpline can be reached on **0808 800 2244** or helpline@headway.org.uk.

Our network of groups and branches continues to go the extra mile to

support local communities in any way they can, whether in the form of re-opening Covid-secure centres, or the provision of innovative virtual support or welfare calls.

They too are under unprecedented pressure and yet volunteers and staff are showing incredible commitment as they try to reduce the sense of isolation being felt by many brain injury survivors and carers.

With your help – whether you choose to support Headway UK or your local group or branch – we can and we must weather this storm.

Christmas with a difference

In this edition of *Headway News*, you can read all about the latest news in the field of brain injury, starting on page six. We also have features on our community fundraising heroes (page 20), and some inspiring stories about survivors who have overcome incredible challenges (page 26).

At the end of September, we were delighted to be able to push ahead with our plans for *Action for Brain Injury Week*, which had been rescheduled from May. This year we focused on memory loss and the ways in which memory problems can affect brain injury survivors and their families. It explored the impact of memory on relationships, recovery and returning to work.

You may also have watched our animation *Memory loss after brain injury*, produced in response to the findings of our survey which found that 72% of brain injury survivors feel that the people in their life don't understand their memory problems. If you're yet to see this, you can do so on our website (headway.org.uk) or social media channels (@HeadwayUK).

With Christmas set to be unlike any other, all we can hope for is a happier New Year.

Take care and please stay safe.

Peter McCabe
Chief Executive



the brain injury association

Who we are

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.

Go digital!

If you'd prefer to receive Headway News as an email then let us know at headway.org.uk/tick-yes

Essential contacts

Headway office:

Bradbury House, 190 Bagnall Road, Old Basford, Nottingham NG6 8SF

Telephone:

0115 924 0800
enquiries@headway.org.uk

Nurse-led freephone helpline:

0808 800 2244 (9am - 5pm, Mon to Fri),
helpline@headway.org.uk

Website:

www.headway.org.uk

Advertising:

directorofcomms@headway.org.uk

Fundraising:

projects@headway.org.uk



STANDING UP FOR YOU

Supporting you to access rehabilitation and secure compensation

Thompsons Solicitors is proud to campaign with Headway to ensure brain injury survivors receive the support they need.

We know that coronavirus (COVID-19) has meant limited access to vital rehabilitation and support, and we're here to help you get things back on track.

Our team of brain injury experts acts exclusively for individuals who have suffered an injury, and never for those who may have caused one.

To speak to a legal specialist at Thompsons Solicitors for no obligation advice, call **0800 0 224 224** or visit www.thompsons.law.



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Your top tips for coping with brain injury

A brain injury can lead to many changes in life as survivors and their loved ones come to terms with ongoing effects such as fatigue, memory problems, communication difficulties and more.

People often describe learning to live with the 'new me', adapting to the changes in personality and circumstances caused by their brain injury.

We asked our online communities to share their top tips for adapting to life after brain injury...

Acceptance that life is different, but can still be good, just different. Fatigue is a part of you. Learn to manage it.

Rebecca Cutler

Rest as much as you need to. Take it slowly but just keep going.

Steph Healy

Don't compare yourself to how things were pre-injury. If you must, compare yourself to the day of your injury.

David Potts

Plan your day, include rest times and naps if needed. When out make contingency plans so you don't get flooded.

Gill Christie

Learn to accept the new you, focus on the positives.

Alison Williams

Visit our website at headway.org.uk/about-brain-injury for information on the effects of brain injury and practical guides to help you cope. You can also get in touch with our helpline to talk through your concerns and get information that is tailored to your circumstances. Contact the team on **0808 800 2244** or helpline@headway.org.uk

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Go green!

Did you know that the plastic wrap used for Headway News is recyclable? It's made from polythene film and starts to break down after just three months. Recycle with carrier bags at larger supermarket stores, not at the kerbside. Do your bit to help save the environment and recycle today.



Latest round-up

With news of your charity's ongoing work to improve life after brain injury

DWP announces change to Personal Independence Payment assessment guidance

Following a landmark legal case, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) updated its guidance issued to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessors to determine the definition of "social support" when engaging with other people face to face.

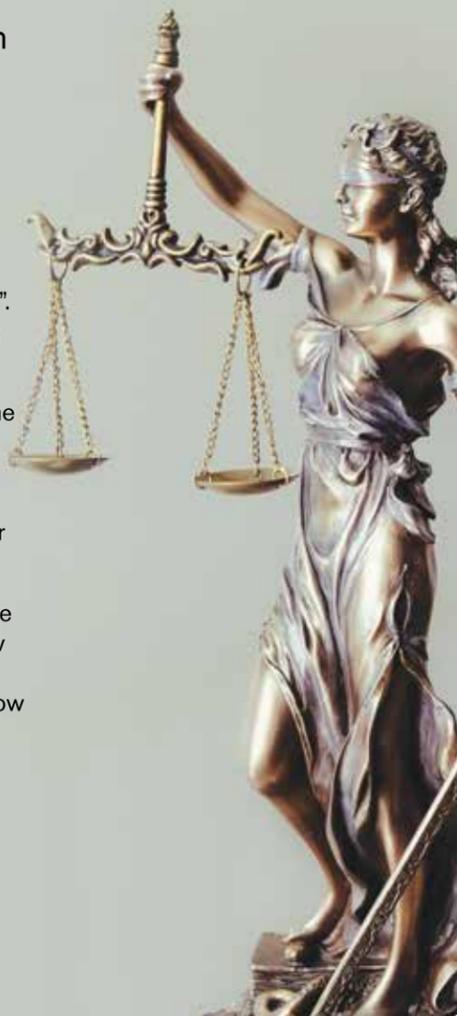
Under the rules, PIP assessors determine whether someone needs "prompting" to engage with other people or they need "social support". The two categories receive different point scores.

The legal case, heard in the Supreme Court, challenged the narrow definition of "social support". The judges ruled that the interpretation of "social support" could be broader than originally thought.

The change means that some people who were ineligible for PIP may now be eligible and some who received only the standard rate of PIP may now be eligible for the enhanced rate.

The DWP says it is undertaking a review of cases but is yet to finalise the framework to conduct those reviews. It has issued a set of frequently asked questions to help, which can be found on the parliament.uk website.

Individuals can seek independent advice to check whether they are able to receive a higher rate of PIP or make a new application under the updated rules. People may be able to get advice from Citizens Advice, Advice UK or the Law Centre Network as to whether they qualify.



Headway frustration over concussion u-turn

Headway has urged the International Football Association Board (IFAB) to reconsider the introduction of temporary concussion substitutes after a meeting of its Concussion Expert Group (CEG) appeared to move away from the idea.

In a meeting in October, the CEG members moved their focus to 'an "additional permanent substitution" protocol, potential test environments and timelines'. No mention was made in the IFAB statement of temporary concussion substitutes.

Headway has repeatedly called for temporary substitutions with a longer 10-minute assessment period to allow sufficient time to assess concussion, as is the case in rugby. The proposed permanent substitutions are unlikely to address this issue.

Peter McCabe, Chief Executive of Headway, said: "Yet again, IFAB appears to be acting in complete contrast to the established practices of other contact sports when it comes to concussion.

"It is fair to say that while we are sadly not surprised, we remain extremely disappointed with this lack of action and unwillingness to even trial the use of temporary substitutes that would allow for 10-minute assessments conducted by independent doctors."



'BBC putting young lives at risk' according to brain injury charity

Headway has criticised the BBC for its decision to broadcast live coverage of a Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fight for the first time and says it is risking the lives of young people.

In October BBC iPlayer showed a series of live MMA bouts. Peter McCabe, Chief Executive of Headway, said: "The BBC's decision to broadcast this event shows a disregard for the dangers such 'sports' pose.

"MMA markets itself as a brutal, money-making spectacle where the objective is to render opponents senseless by kicking and punching them in the head. It is no surprise when someone is seriously hurt or sustains a fatal neurological injury.

"Without question, this sport should be banned, and it is wholly unacceptable that the BBC is

choosing to broadcast this live, giving wider exposure to impressionable children.

"The BBC states that it always 'acts in the public interest', but in broadcasting this event from 4.30pm, it acted in its own best interest by trying to drive a younger audience to its channel.

"Only last year Saeideh Aletaha, just 26 at the time, tragically died following an MMA bout. Every MMA bout carries the risk of a fatality or serious brain injury. The question is, do we want children to be watching this happen?"

"We're deeply concerned that the credibility given to this dangerous sport by the BBC will not only expose impressionable children to MMA fighting, but may also potentially encourage them to copy moves themselves."

Pro cycling fails riders following Weening crash

Former professional cyclist Matt Brammeier has hit out at professional cycling and reminded people about the dangers of concussion after fellow cyclist Pieter Weening was allowed to continue riding after appearing to sustain a concussion in a fall mid-race.

Weening fell off his bike when he ran over a water bottle near the end of stage four of the Giro d'Italia, striking his head on the tarmac. According to a BBC report, 'he was allowed to mount his bike and continue despite looking confused and trying to put his foot on his pedal, which was nowhere near him.'

Matt himself knows about the dangers of concussion after he crashed head-on into a car while travelling at speed during stage six of the Tour of Utah in 2015.

Matt said: "It's only now I'm aware of the implications of concussion it makes me realise how bad it is that cyclists are not made aware of the dangers and lasting effects of not dealing with head injuries properly."

Luke Griggs, Deputy Chief Executive of Headway, said: "The decision to allow Pieter Weening to get back on his bike after hitting his head with such force and clearly being unsteady on his feet raises serious questions as to whether or not concussion protocols were followed.

"The video footage, which shows Weening stumbling and struggling to put his foot back on the pedal, is deeply concerning.

"This is another shocking example of sport failing to protect those taking part. Cycling is lagging miles behind other sports in the way it deals with concussion. This simply has to change before tragedy strikes."

Latest round-up

With news of your charity's ongoing work to improve life after brain injury

E-scooters: Headway responds to Transport Select Committee report

The Transport Select Committee has recommended to the government that privately owned and rental e-scooters should be fully legalised on public roads, despite concerns over the safety of riders and pedestrians.

Headway, which contributed to the committee's consultation, has expressed concern over the recommendation and its timing, with 12-month trials to assess e-scooter safety still ongoing.

Reports from America suggest that from 2014 to 2018 more than 39,000 people in the US were injured whilst riding e-scooters. In the UK, three people are already known to have died using them, with hospitals reportedly treating an increasing number of e-scooter-related casualties, including those sustaining brain injuries, among riders and pedestrians alike.

The committee's report states: 'it is important [...] that e-scooter operators involved with the trials encourage users to wear helmets, and where possible, operators should provide them. Should privately owned e-scooters be legalised for use on roads, the Department should likewise encourage helmet use.'

Headway believes that all e-scooter riders should wear a helmet, particularly as evidence from Denmark suggests that the rate of

e-scooter rider injuries was eight times higher than for cyclists.



Sarah Russell, Public Affairs Manager at Headway, said: "We understand the long-lasting impacts of brain injury on survivors and their families. With one brain injury occurring every 90 seconds in the UK alone, anything we can do to limit the number and severity of brain injuries is vital.

"It is essential that brain injury survivors and others with long-term conditions or disabilities continue to be consulted about the use of e-scooters."

Headway welcomes decision to keep BBC red button service

Headway welcomes the BBC's U-turn to end its red button text service after the proposal sparked criticism from campaigners, including Headway, due to fears it would disproportionately affect people with disabilities and long-term conditions.

Sarah Russell, Public Affairs Manager at Headway, said: "We are pleased to see the BBC has reversed its decision to scrap the red button facility. Many of our service users told us they would be disadvantaged by its removal, particularly those with visual or cognitive problems after brain injury."

The BBC has confirmed that the most-used elements of the red button service would remain, including news headlines, sports fixtures and results and the weather forecast, alongside streaming services for the likes of Wimbledon and Glastonbury.

Sarah added: "Retaining these elements of the red button service will be welcomed by brain injury survivors."



Supporting Headway is as easy as pie...

MINCE PIE MORNING

Hold a mince pie morning in December and raise money for Headway – the brain injury association.

Whether you choose to share them with colleagues over Zoom, bake a batch as a

family or savour one alone, every mince pie eaten and every pound donated will help us to continue improving life after brain injury.

Don't forget to share your photos with us on social media using the hashtag #mincepiemorning. To find out more, visit headway.org.uk/mince-pie-morning.



the brain injury association

Headway - the brain injury association is registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales (Charity no. 1025852) and the Office of the Scottish Regulator (Charity no. SC 039992).

ESCAPE THE WILD FOR HEADWAY

Thursday 13th – Friday 14th May 2021
Ullswater, Lake District

Headway brings you a brand-new corporate adventure for 2021! Are you ready to put your teamwork to the test and take on exhilarating challenges for a great cause?

- Trekking & navigation
- Tyrolean zip wire
- Climbing & abseils
- Gorges & ravines
- Scrambling
- Camp under the stars
- River crossing
- Rafting

Registration £50 per person

Individuals welcome

Minimum sponsorship: £300 per person

This is a corporate supporter only event, please contact us for all other fundraising opportunities.

Contact us on partnerships@headway.org.uk or 0115 924 0800 for further details.



Kindly sponsored by



MEMORY LOSS

A campaign to remember

'I forget things all the time too' is just one of the many frustrating phrases brain injury survivors hear when trying to explain the debilitating and devastating consequences of memory loss following brain injury.

Memory is easily affected by brain injury as the process of remembering involves the stages of taking in information, storing it adequately and retrieving it when needed. When an injury occurs to the parts of the brain responsible for these stages, it can lead to impaired memory performance.

For the vast majority of people, memory problems will only extend as far as forgetting where they left their keys or the name of their new colleague, for example.

But for some brain injury survivors, they may be forced to come to terms with a whole new way of life as memory loss presents new and complex challenges.

Relationship problems, loss of identity, the difficulties of returning to work and the frustration caused by others' lack of understanding are just some of the issues that go hand-in-hand with impaired memory.

Headway's *Memory Loss: A campaign to remember* shines a light on the challenges brain injury survivors living with memory problems and their loved ones may face.

Through our special campaign animation, responses to our survey and sharing first-hand experiences of survivors and those closest to them, we are working to raise awareness of the disabling effects of memory loss after brain injury.



Memory Survey

In keeping with previous campaigns, we launched a survey earlier this year to give brain injury survivors a voice to share their own experiences about memory problems.

The survey was designed to highlight just how common memory loss is and how far-reaching its impact can be, while also examining ways in which we can best support survivors with this issue.

We would like to thank the brain injury survivors who completed the survey, and the Headway groups and branches who shared it with their networks.

We received over 2,000 responses, a testament to how common this effect of brain injury is. Unsurprisingly, we found that people's experiences of managing memory loss are predominantly negative – with many survivors labelling their experience as frustrating, confusing, devastating and debilitating.

However, we also found people sharing positive attitudes of optimism and hope for an improved future.

Below, we take a look at some of the key findings from the survey.

70% of brain injury survivors struggle to recall personal memories, such as their wedding or the birth of their child.

Personal memories, otherwise known as episodic memories, are what make us who we are. They remind us of the life we've lived, our good and bad times, they are the stories we've lived up until now.

Losing such precious memories is a common experience after brain injury, with most of our survey respondents agreeing that they struggle to recall personal memories, including key life events such as their wedding day or the birth of their child.

65% of brain injury survivors feel that their personal relationships have been affected by their memory problems.

Whether it is forgetting important personal milestones or memories, or the additional responsibility that may be placed on partners and family members due to having to take on greater responsibility for everyday tasks, memory problems can add significant pressure to relationships.



85% of brain injury survivors feel that memory problems have a negative impact on their life.

Memory is a skill that we rely on for almost every aspect of life, from socialising and forming relationships, to managing our day-to-day life and working. Given the role memory has in so many aspects of life, it is unsurprising that almost all brain injury survivors felt that their life is negatively impacted by their memory problems.

51% of brain injury survivors feel optimistic about the future despite their memory problems.

Regardless of the negative impact of memory problems, around half of all brain injury survivors remain optimistic about their future. This tallies with the results of Headway's 2017 study, *A New Me*, and shows that with the right help, at the right time, there can be life after brain injury.

Around 70% of brain injury survivors have found ways of managing their memory problems to reduce the impact they have on their life.

Short-term and working memory problems (i.e. memory problems that affect one's ability to remember and retain new information) can cause many practical challenges in life, for instance causing a survivor to forget important dates or people they have just met.

Using coping strategies and learning new ways to retain information are just some of the ways that brain injury survivors manage these issues. (For more help with this, download our factsheet *Coping with memory problems - practical strategies* from the information library on our website.)

81% of brain injury survivors agree that their life would be improved if people had a better understanding of their memory problems.

The effects of brain injury can often be hidden and misunderstood, even by partners and family members. That lack of understanding can be hugely frustrating and hurtful for the brain injury survivor.

Our booklet, *The effects of brain injury and how to help*, is written to help people to improve their understanding and better support brain injury survivors. Download it for free from headway.org.uk.



Karl Hargreaves

Years of precious memories were wiped in an instant when Karl Hargreaves was involved in a road traffic collision.

The memories of his girlfriend, the death of his mother and years' worth of relationships – all gone in a split second.

He said: "Large chunks of my life were initially missing, and I was terrified that things would remain that way. All of my family relationships just didn't exist in the same way in my mind. Some of them weren't there at all. It was as if they had been erased."

"Perhaps the hardest thing to come to terms with has been knowing that, in a sense, I did die. The old Karl, everything I was, died on that road in 2015."

"My memories, experiences, skills and abilities, all gone. I lost so much and I had to learn to let go and move on."

Over time, some of Karl's memories have returned, but he's still trying to fill in the gaps he's been left with.

He said: "I never regained the memories of events immediately prior to or following the accident, and I don't think I ever will. But distant memories in my past would sometimes return."

"I would often hear a piece of music that triggered a memory and I would associate it with what I had been doing, and suddenly another gap would be filled. Every time it happened, it was a great comfort and helped me feel a little more connected to myself."



Samuel Moore

Samuel Moore sustained a traumatic brain injury after he was assaulted. His memory loss was so severe that he would often forget where he lived, causing him to walk into other people's homes believing it was his own.

He said: "People would come up to me in the street and start talking and I'd have to say 'Sorry, who are you?'. It put a lot of people off."

Sam's memory loss also meant that he would forget what his house looked like and would often get lost.

He said: "I lived in a very small town and had been there for many years so I knew it like the back of my hand. But after the attack I started getting lost and would spend hours wandering around."

"I would forget which house was mine and after about three or four hours of searching ended up picking a house at random and walking through the front door, hoping that I had chosen the right one."

It wasn't until Sam found Headway in 2019 that the true extent of his injuries became apparent.

Sam said: "The Headway helpline was an absolute godsend for me. The nurse I spoke to was very helpful and sent me leaflets and booklets about brain injury and its effects. It was a huge relief to find out what I was going through was normal after a brain injury and that there was help out there."



Rebekah Nesbitt

27-year-old Rebekah Nesbitt can't remember the special day when her fiancé James proposed to her.

Rebekah met James in 2011 when he accidentally spilt his drink over her in a pub. By way of apology, James asked her out on a date and the couple have been together ever since.

The pair spent five happy years together, until a tragic accident put their relationship to the ultimate test.

In September 2016, Rebekah was driving to the stables for a weekly horse riding lesson when she lost control of the car. She was left with a traumatic brain injury and damage to the back of her skull.

Since then, memory loss has presented a number of challenges, most notably within her relationship. Sadly, Rebekah remembers nothing of the proposal and the couple's plans to marry in 2017 had to be put on hold.

She said: "I'm annoyed and sad that I can't remember what would've been the loveliest surprise I'd had in my life."

"Apparently James organised a trip to London and took me to Hyde Park to pop the question. Then we went to a really posh restaurant to celebrate - I'm sure it was a really special and romantic occasion."

Following the accident, James now helps to take care of Rebekah while holding down a full-time job.

Rebekah said: "James has been there for me when it would have been understandable if he had found himself unable to cope as a 26-year-old faced with the daunting prospect of having to care for me."

New animation at the heart of Memory Loss campaign

A key aim of *Memory Loss: A campaign to remember* is to increase understanding and raise awareness of the misunderstood and hidden effects of memory loss following brain injury.

Along with our survey results and personal testimonies, we produced a short animation film which is designed to provide a clear, visual overview of this common effect of brain injury.

The animation tells the story of Tony, a father who sustained a brain injury in a car accident. After waking from a coma, he didn't recognise the very people who had been by his hospital bedside the entire time, his family and closest friends.

The animation goes on to explore themes of relationship breakdown and the frustration of not remembering everyday events, while taking the viewer along the journey as Tony and his family try to get to grips with a new way of life.

Although based on a fictional character, Tony's experiences of memory loss are all too real. The film gives an honest and emotional insight into some of the struggles voiced by those living with the devastating consequences of memory loss.

Importantly, the animation gives brain injury survivors and their loved ones guidance on seeking support - whether that be through contacting our nurse-led freephone helpline, or accessing information on coping strategies via our factsheets, booklets or website.

To watch the animation film, visit abiweek.org.uk.



Expert comment – Professor Barbara Wilson OBE

Although people tend to talk about memory as if it were one skill or function or ability, there are in fact many kinds of memory and many ways it can be classified.



Professor Barbara Wilson OBE

We can consider memory in terms of the length of time for which memories are stored; the type of information to be remembered; the modality the information is in; the stages in the process of remembering; explicit or implicit memory; whether recall or recognition is required; whether the memory is retrospective (for things that have already occurred) or prospective (remembering what has to be done) and whether the memory dates from before or after an injury or illness.

The typical situation for most memory-impaired people is for their immediate memory to be normal or nearly normal, to have problems after a delay or distraction, to have difficulty learning most kinds of new information, and to remember things learned a long time before the accident or illness better than things which happened a short time before.

The three main approaches to current memory rehabilitation are improving learning, compensating for memory difficulties through the employment of external memory aids, and adjusting or modifying the environment so people can survive without a functioning memory system.

New learning includes spaced retrieval,

vanishing cues and errorless learning. External memory aids such as diaries, notebooks, tape recorders and mobile phones, widely used by the general population, are often problematic for memory-impaired people simply because their successful use involves memory.

For those with severe and widespread problems, the best method may involve restructuring or organising the environment.

The emotional consequences of memory impairment such as anxiety, depression and loneliness should also be dealt with in rehabilitation through counselling, anxiety-management techniques and treatment in memory or psychotherapy groups.

Thank you for supporting ABI Week

Artwork created by members of Headway Norfolk and Waveney

People from all corners of the UK got involved in this year's ABI Week, from our groups and branches to the very individuals we're working hard to support.

Here, we take a look at the creative ways in which you've helped to raise awareness of memory loss after brain injury.

Headway groups and branches

Even during these strange and unprecedented times, Headway groups and branches have been doing all they can to get involved in the campaign.

Headway Bath conducted virtual group video calls to discuss memory loss with brain injury survivors and those closest to them, whilst also producing a video around these discussions – exploring observations, tips for managing memory problems and more. This can be viewed on the group's YouTube channel.

Over in the Midlands, Headway Leicestershire put together memory packs for its clients which included memory recall activities, quizzes and even a delicious apple crumble recipe.

Members at Headway Norfolk and Waveney channelled their creative sides by producing paintings, drawings and collages which focused on how their memory has changed since their brain injury. Many people chose to present a memory from before their injury, others decided to show an abstract memory or even words about how they feel.



Headway West London led a digital discussion forum during the awareness-raising week, whilst Headway East Lothian invited its service users to explore what memory loss means to them during a special ABI Week workshop.

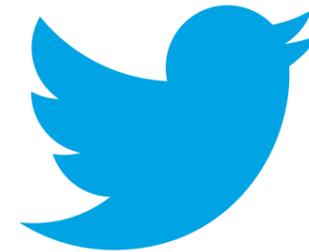
Headway Suffolk got involved by speaking to their local media,

with service user Peter sharing his experiences with local and regional newspapers.

Hertfordshire Headway also landed local press coverage, speaking to Welwyn Hatfield Times about the support it offered to a stroke survivor, Darren, after he began experiencing problems with his memory.

The brain injury community

We loved seeing members of the online brain injury community get involved with ABI Week. Here we share some of the most popular tweets from throughout the week.



Irwin Mitchell @irwinmitchell
"It's important that people realise brain injuries affect us in so many different ways" – with the help of our client Niraj, who suffered a life-changing road traffic collision in 2016, we're supporting @HeadwayUK's #ABIWeek which focuses on memory loss bit.ly/2GdFz1w

Headway Oxfordshire @HeadwayOxford
"I actively build happy memories to boost my energy with endorphins and enjoy the results, as I learn to build a positive future of my own choice".
Read more about Anita's Story: headwayoxfordshire.org.uk/anita-williams

Royds Wiltby King Personal Injury Team @RWK_Pers Injury
Watch 'Remember Me?' - our short film showing the impact of memory loss after a brain injury ahead of @HeadwayUK's #ABIWeek next week.

Headway East London @HeadwayLondon
"There is a sense of loss, everybody wants to try & get back to the same person that they were & do the same things they used to"

For #ABIWeek we've launched a new campaign #WelcomeToMyWorld sharing first-hand stories of #braininjury Here is Dave's:

Headway West London @HeadwayWestLondon
Welcome to My World - Dave
"I don't remember anything from that first week in hospital and vaguely remember the next five weeks. But I came out of hospital a different person."

CW Personal Injury & Medical negligence team @PLMedNegCW
Living with #memoryloss can have a negative impact on everyday life. #ABIWeek
We explore how the right strategies and support can make a real difference to coping with memory loss.

Headway Essex @HeadwayEssex
This is a card game in which all of the cards are laid face down on a surface and two cards are flipped face up each turn.
The object is to turn over pairs of matching cards. This helps improve sustained attention, visual recognition, and short-term memory skills.

Fosters Solicitors @FostersSol
We hear of a family's personal experience of brain injury and #memoryloss as part of #ABIWeek
Thank you to Ben and Michaela for sharing their story with us.

Norfolk Headway @NorfolkHeadway
King's Lynn Occupational Therapist Mike has created a video to go through strategies for those affected by memory loss as an affect of their brain injury.
Some of these strategies include adapting the environment, setting a routine and looking after your wellbeing. #Abiweek

Royds Wiltby King Personal Injury Team @RWK_Pers Injury
Watch 'Remember Me?' - our short film showing the impact of memory loss after a brain injury ahead of @HeadwayUK's #ABIWeek next week.

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MEMORY LOSS
A campaign to remember

'I CAN FORGET TO TURN COOKERS OFF'

We asked Ron Gains to share his experience of memory loss. Here's what he told us...



Ron, who sustained a brain injury in 2013 and now battles with memory problems daily, answered our questions in the hope of raising awareness and understanding of this complex condition.

How has memory loss affected you?

Pre-head-pop as we call it, my memory's as good as anybody's. But since, we're talking five days maximum – sometimes it can be funny, other times it's a bit worrying. I can forget to turn cookers off; fires off; lights off even. Jayne, my wife, follows me around, a bit like a child really, making sure I've switched things off. This is my life today. I couldn't manage on my own because I couldn't be trusted to do things I should remember to do.

Have there been any positives to come from your memory loss?

One real positive about having no memory is the ability to watch something, a live show, TV programme or film, and thoroughly enjoy it and then five days later, watch it all over again like it's the

first time I've seen it. I can see something advertised on television and say to Jayne, 'look what's on', and she'll smile and look at me and I'll say 'I've seen it, haven't I?' and she'll respond 'yes, you have'. I haven't got a clue I've seen it though!

How do you cope with memory problems?

Jayne and I do everything together – she's my memory back-up and takes hundreds of photographs. Afterwards, these photographs help to jog a memory and remind me of where we've been, what we've done, what we've seen and who we've seen.

I also wear a sunflower lanyard all the time with my Headway Brain Injury Identity Card attached to it. It has my picture on, says I've suffered a brain injury and gives two or three scenarios so people can recognise if I'm involved in a sticky situation and Jayne's not around. It's like a comfort blanket around my neck.

For more information about Headway's *Brain Injury Identity Card* and to apply, visit www.headway.org.uk/idcard

Helpline FAQs

Here we answer some of the helpline's most frequently asked questions.



Why do I keep forgetting the news I've read this morning, but I can remember things from years ago?

Memory is not technically one single skill; there are lots of different types of memories stored across the brain and different ways of categorising them. Often, people refer to memories in two broad categories: short term and long term.

The basic stages of getting information from short-term to long-term memory are initially taking information in, storing it and retrieving it when needed (i.e. remembering). Different parts of the brain are involved in these stages, for instance the hippocampus is a part of the brain involved in storing long-term memories.

Long-term memories have had time to undergo each stage and be stored properly through a process known as consolidation. Day-to-day memories, on the other hand, are new information that have not had a chance to undergo this process of consolidation. A brain injury can affect any of the stages involved in this process, therefore disrupting memory storage and leading to poor recollection of the information.

Will I ever get my memories back after brain injury?

Personal memories, known as anecdotal memories, can and do often return after brain injury. Sometimes this can take place over the course of the initial recovery period, while other memories may take weeks, months or even years to gradually return. Some memories can be encouraged to return by looking at photographs, personal objects or listening to music relating to the memory.

It is common for the memories immediately preceding and following the incidence of the injury to remain 'forgotten'.

Sadly, there may be memories that do not return directly to you, or memories that return but are not as clear as they used to be. It is perfectly normal to grieve for this loss. You can try to feel a stronger connection to the memory by talking to family and friends about it or looking through photographs.

New memories can still be formed as you continue your journey through your life after brain injury. You may wish to document these new memories, such as special events, recovery milestones or even day-to-day activities, by taking photos or keeping a diary.

How can I improve my memory after brain injury?

While there is no specific or instant 'cure' for memory problems, recovery can naturally occur as the brain heals over time. It may also be that some of the other effects of your brain injury, such as fatigue or problems with concentration, interfere with the ability to focus on information to learn it in the first place, so addressing these problems may in turn help to improve your memory.

Rehearsing information or practising routines can help with remembering information. A family member or

friend could help by testing you with successively longer gaps between you rehearsing the information and being tested on it each time.

'Errorless learning' is a memory training technique that research has found to be effective for learning specific processes or sequences of things. It entails learning the information correctly the first time round so that mistakes are not accidentally learnt first. Someone can help you with learning and practicing the information correctly the first time round and gradually reducing the amount of help given.

Many people with memory problems use external memory aids (such as diaries, calendars, to-do lists etc), to help with remembering information. Research suggests that using technology such as pagers, portable electronic devices, alarms and voice recorders can also be helpful.

You can get more information or emotional support from the Headway helpline by calling **0808 800 2244** or emailing helpline@headway.org.uk. We also have a Headway booklet on this topic called *Memory problems after brain injury* which you can access for free from our website at www.headway.org.uk/information-library

10 things NOT to say to someone with a brain injury

Living with a brain injury presents a wide range of challenges, but one of the most difficult things for many survivors is the lack of understanding from the people around them.

Because of this, people with a brain injury often face comments from well-meaning family members, friends and strangers that only add to the frustration of living with a complex and often invisible condition.

To help address the problem, we asked our members to share their experiences of this and, judging by the responses we received, it's clear this is an issue many people face!

Here's the top ten list of things not to say to someone living with a brain injury...

I know what you mean... I've got a terrible memory too!

For people who don't have a brain injury, it can be difficult to imagine the reality of living with a memory problem. After all, we all forget things, but an injury to the brain can stop memories being stored and/or retrieved, meaning people genuinely can't remember. Being forgetful and having memory problems as a result of brain injury are worlds apart!

Despite the best intentions, saying things like 'I have a terrible memory too' risks showing a lack of understanding and can come across as patronising and offensive.

But you don't look disabled...

Brain injury is often referred to as 'the hidden disability' because the cognitive, emotional and behavioural effects can still be present long after any physical injuries have healed.

Don't assume that just because someone looks fine on the outside, they're not experiencing long-term effects. Comments such as: 'It doesn't look like there's anything wrong with you' and 'But you're better now, aren't you?' are unlikely to help!

You're tired? At your age?!

A surprising number of people experience comments along these lines. Fatigue is a very real and very debilitating effect of a brain injury, but because it's often almost completely invisible, it's perhaps understandable that people don't immediately pick up on the difficulties it can cause.

Living with fatigue is very different to the normal feeling of tiredness we all experience at the end of a busy day. It requires careful management and the support and understanding of friends, family and colleagues.

Are you sure you should be doing that?

An essential part of the rehabilitation process is relearning lost skills by pushing yourself to do challenging tasks. It's often better to give things a go than simply accept defeat, so having your ability judged by someone else can be extremely frustrating. It's great to offer help and support in case the person with a brain injury can't manage a task, but tread carefully when judging ability.

One of the key aims of Headway is to help people regain as much independence as possible. Brain injury survivors don't want people to do everything for them – they want help to be able to do things themselves.

You should be back to normal by now.

Assessing the effects and likely outcomes of a brain injury challenges even the most experienced doctors, so receiving this advice is likely to result in an angry response.

Yes, the injury may have occurred 'a while ago', but the recovery process is different for everyone and for some people the effects of a brain injury may last a lifetime.

At the same time, the word 'normal' can inadvertently cause offence. What is normal? Suggesting a person is not 'normal' again could lead to feelings that they are somehow inferior.

It's all in your mind!

A brain injury does affect the mind, but unfortunately not in a way that means a person can just decide to get better. Damage to the brain cannot be repaired, and any recovery is a result of the brain adapting to change and finding new ways to work.

This isn't something that can be controlled by simple conscious thought so there's little more frustrating for a person with a brain injury than being told to 'snap out of it'!

Chin up – there's always someone worse off

This common line is certainly well-meaning, with a clear intention to make the person with a brain injury feel better about their situation and encourage positive thinking.

But when dealing with everyday fatigue, memory problems, difficulty concentrating or anything else from the long list of brain injury symptoms, it doesn't always help to know that some people are dealing with worse.

Instead of saying 'It could've been worse', a better approach might be simply to acknowledge their difficulties, offering help if it's needed.

Move on and stop dwelling on what happened.

One to avoid at all costs! The effects of a brain injury can last for weeks, months, years, or even a lifetime. Improvements may happen through the natural healing process, rehabilitation, hard work or a combination of these, but a person can't simply decide to 'get better' and move on.

Encouragement and support are the best ways you can help people maximise their recovery after brain injury.

I know someone who had a brain injury and they're fine now.

This comes down to something many people don't understand – no two brain injuries are the same! Even two people with very similar injuries may experience totally different effects, and while it can be motivational to hear of other people making good progress, it certainly isn't helpful to be judged for not recovering as quickly as them.

But you were able to do that yesterday...

People who say this don't realise the fluctuating nature of a brain injury, which is often down to fatigue. In some cases it can be because they did a task yesterday that they can't today.

Pushing too hard after a brain injury can cause difficulties for hours or even days afterwards, and this is a time when support and understanding is needed more than ever.

Check out and share our award-winning film on this subject, which you can view on our website or YouTube channel.

Sometimes... we don't get the chance to say goodbye

When songwriter Wayne Plant's good friend Lisa died unexpectedly in 2018, he found that it was music that helped him to honour her memory.

Wayne and Lisa first became friends in 2014 when she messaged him online about the rock band Queen. They were both avid fans and this mutual love led to six wonderful years of friendship. They'd attend concerts and gigs together and spend hours talking about their favourite band.

But in 2018, Lisa suddenly and tragically died from a brain aneurysm. Wayne said: "I, like everyone else, was friends with

Lisa because she was so much fun. Lisa was loved by everyone, especially all her Queen friends.

"A family friend told me she was seriously ill in hospital and that she had suffered a brain aneurysm. I messaged her saying 'Stay strong darling, you can pull through this' – she never got the message and died just a few hours later.

"Lisa was a wonderful mother to two children and always the life and soul of the party. She chose to donate her organs and saved at least five lives. Even after her death, she was still helping others."

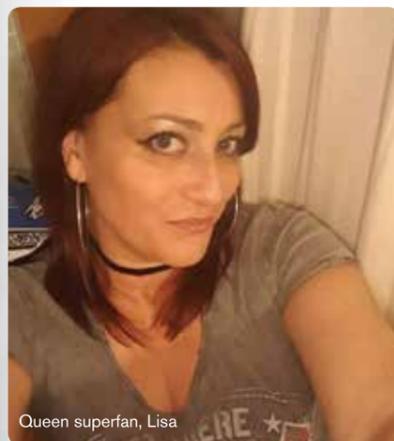
Sadly, due to personal matters, Wayne couldn't attend Lisa's funeral. It was because of this that he was inspired to write a song called *Sometimes... We Don't Get The Chance To Say Goodbye*.

"I began thinking about Lisa and not being able to go to her funeral, then I started writing down the first lines of the song - 'Sometimes you never get the chance to say goodbye. Sometimes you don't realise that your heart is simply made of glass, you feel it crack, you feel it break when good times start to pass.' This song is a lasting tribute to her."

"I believe music is a gift that should be given back if possible. During these difficult times it is heart-breaking to see that some people have not been able to say goodbye to their loved ones, so I hope people take comfort from this song."

Wayne worked alongside singer Lydia Eliza and his company Intimate Rush Music to produce the song, 100% of the royalties of which will be donated to Headway throughout the month of December.

The song is now available to buy or download on all major streaming sites, such as iTunes and Spotify. Wayne hopes that it'll make Christmas number one.



Queen superfan, Lisa

BAKING A DIFFERENCE



Headway Heroes from up and down the country have been finding creative and innovative ways to fundraise for the charity throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Brain injury survivor turned author and self-taught baker Thomas Leeds is one of these people.

At just 19 years old, Thomas was involved in a serious road traffic collision and sustained a brain injury.

He said: "I was very lucky to live and retain so many abilities – I could still walk and talk which was amazing. But my brain injury meant that I struggled with memory loss and epilepsy."

"Losing so many of my memories made life a challenge, but thankfully most days I'm able to live a pretty full and normal life with my wife and two little girls. I still have what I call my 'bad brain days' though, they can make life very hard."

Since his injury in 2003, Thomas and his family have been supported by Headway and its frontline services.

Thomas said: "Headway supported me at the very beginning through its helpline. I was able to talk to someone experienced about the challenges and changes I was facing, and they recommended ways to cope and make the best of the abilities I had, which was a huge help. Since then I've been a big fan of this incredible charity and the amazing work they do, and love seeing how they help fellow survivors."

It was for this reason that Thomas decided to embark on a Christmas baking extravaganza for Headway. He's been baking some of his favourite sweet treats in the run up to the festive season, sharing them on his Instagram page and asking people to donate to Headway.

"I fell in love with baking after my brain injury," he said. "I tried to recreate one of my grandma's recipes, but my memory problems meant that I lost track of the ingredients and just kept adding things and tasting it until I was happy. Everyone loved it and asked me to make more which at a time when I felt pretty hopeless, made me feel a lot more able."

"Since then it's become a special part of my life, albeit at an amateur level. I love getting creative with the designs of my cakes and I'm really passionate about the flavours too. It's now something I enjoy doing with our little girls, which has made it even more satisfying."

"Baking helps me feel a little sense of achievement and is a nice way to show my family I love them. By day I'm a full-time dad and by night I am the Baker Elf!"

"This year I've been thinking a lot about how difficult it must be trying to raise funds when the pandemic restrictions have made a lot of the usual events impossible. I was already thinking of trying some new bakes this festive season and I realised it might be a nice way to raise a little bit of money for Headway and increase awareness of brain injury."

"I'm really enjoying playing around with some new ideas and I've been touched that so many people have already donated. I'm really looking forward to getting festive in the kitchen as we count down to Christmas and count up towards my fundraising target."

Among his other achievements, such as writing an adventure book based on his experiences and speaking at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Thomas has already raised £100 for Headway.

We are so grateful to Thomas and all our other incredible fundraisers across the country, but we still need your help. We are anticipating a potential shortfall of £2 million in income in 2020 and it's likely that these financial difficulties will continue in years to come.

Whether you choose to take part in a virtual organised event or come up with your own fundraising challenge at home, every pound raised will go towards supporting survivors like Thomas, both now and hopefully long into the future.

Find out more about how to get involved by visiting headway.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise-for-us/.

To see more of Thomas' festive bakes, visit his Instagram account @bakerefl, or to donate, go to justgiving.com/fundraising/bakerefl



A MARATHON EFFORT!

It's fair to say that this is not the way organisers planned to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the London Marathon! Due to the coronavirus, this year's race took place virtually – with people from up and down the country running a marathon their way, in their own cities and towns.

Although under different circumstances, our team of 23 Headway Heroes did us proud this year, each covering a gruelling distance of 26.2 miles. Together, they raised an incredible £42,000.



A lasting memory

Stephen Denniss, from Dartford, Kent, ran in memory of his cousin's daughter Amy Haskew after she was involved in a fatal cycling accident while on holiday in Australia. Amy had sustained a traumatic brain injury and was put on life support for the next month. Heartbreakingly, her injuries were too severe and she sadly died.

Stephen said: "If Amy had survived, she and our family would have come to rely on Headway."

In order to leave a legacy in Amy's memory and to support others who may find themselves in a similar position, the family set up a fundraising page called *Remembering Amy*.

"A number of family members have undertaken marathons in Amy's memory and the London Marathon 2020 was my turn," added Stephen.

"My memory of the day itself includes cars hooting and passengers shouting their support, marathon runners sharing distances to go and encouraging each other, and one lady out walking in the rain who stopped, stood by the side of the road and clapped as I passed forming a crowd of one."

'One step further'

In 2013, Jen Fewtrell's husband Rich suffered a haemorrhagic stroke. He underwent an operation to stabilise his condition and was in a coma for a few days, having been brought into hospital with no vision or movement in his limbs.



Jen said: "Rich has made a great recovery and has come a long way, but it's been slow at times and he has lost a great deal.

"There were some extremely dark days for us both during his recovery and it was at this time we called on Headway who provided counselling for us both, a much-valued source of support during the worst of times."

"We both wanted to support Headway after the help we had been given, and have fundraised by taking part in the Great North Run and the London Parks Half. I wanted to go one step further and applied for the London Marathon. However, both my 2018 and 2019 attempts were thwarted by my own cancer diagnosis. Thankfully, my place was rolled over to 2020 and I was excited to take part in the virtual race."

Jen ran loops of Hyde Park, with Rich cycling by her side, supporting her along the way.

She added: "This was my first marathon and I loved it, apart from the final six miles! I'd finished more radiotherapy four weeks before, so I was thrilled to be doing it at all!"

The long-term effects of concussion

Sidney Mortimer always had a passion for rugby. He'd been an amateur rugby player for more than 15 years, but in that time, he sustained his fair share of injuries.

He said: "I had received all sorts of knocks, but one recurring injury was



always concussion. A couple of years ago I had a concussion which had some longer-term effects on my health - headaches, dizziness, and the inability to sleep properly.

"After talking to my coach, doctors and a neurologist, I knew it was time to hang up the boots. It wasn't until after I stopped and began looking into the effects of concussion that I realised how serious the implications were and how lucky I had been."

On the wet and windy Sunday morning, Sidney completed his marathon in and around Victoria Park, London. He said: "The atmosphere of lots of other people running and supporting each other in the park that day really motivated me and eventually the rain didn't bother me. I surprised myself and knocked my time down to three hours and 28 minutes! Finishing the marathon felt like such a massive achievement."

'The perfect charity to run for'

Another of this year's runners was Paul Lockhart, great-nephew of Phillip Lockhart, one of Headway's founders. As well as witnessing the devastating effects of brain injury first-hand through his uncle's work, Paul and his older sister were also forced to come to terms with huge changes throughout their childhood when their mother had a brain haemorrhage.

Paul said: "Mum was told she would never walk again, but she did, and she lived a relatively independent life until years later when it was discovered that she had a pocket of fluid on the brain. She had to have an operation, but it didn't go well and she then had eight further surgeries to try and correct the error. Sadly, she never returned to the life she had and now resides in a care home."

When asked about his motivation behind running the marathon, Paul said: "As Mum had been supported by the charity and my great uncle was a co-founder, I felt Headway would be the perfect charity to run for and I am so glad I did.

"Mile 21 for me was at the Three Locks pub where my wife, children and in-laws had been in wait with banners. I nearly didn't make it to the finish line as the river that runs next to the canal in Leighton Buzzard was flooding the towpath, but I decided to brave it and, although it cost me an extra mile, I made it to my destination some 27.9 miles later."



Give in their memory

Headway in Memory (www.headwayinmemory.org.uk) is a place to remember someone special. Our site provides families connected to brain injury with a private and secure space to share memories and support one another following the loss of a loved one.

- Every 90 seconds, someone in the UK is admitted to hospital with an acquired brain injury, sadly, not all of these people survive.
- Head injury is the most common cause of death and disability in people aged 1–40 years in the UK.
- Stroke is the fourth biggest killer in the UK.

Setting up a tribute on our page is a special way to remember the life of your loved one by enabling you to create your own unique, beautiful and lasting online memorial page in their name. It can be a place where you can share treasured memories and precious moments through

posting your thoughts, photos and videos.

You can invite family and friends to view the page and post messages of support, remembrance and love. You also have the option for the page to take donations to support the vital work of Headway.

How do I set up a tribute page?

It is simple to set up a tribute page, on which you can add as much or as little information as you wish. You can also upload your favourite photos of your loved one. Simply visit headwayinmemory.org.uk to get started.

Is there a cost?

The site is free to use and provided by Headway to those who have lost loved ones as a result of brain injury.

Where do the donations go?

All donations made via the tribute page will come directly to Headway – the brain injury association, helping us support others affected by brain injury.

Can everyone see my tribute page?

That's entirely up to you. You have the option of allowing people to search for your loved one's

tribute page or, if you'd prefer, the page can be set as private so that family and friends can only access it if the unique page link has been shared with them.

To set up your tribute page, visit www.headwayinmemory.org.uk, or if you have any questions get in touch on **0115 924 0800** or projects@headway.org.uk.

Coping with grief

With the help of Cruse Bereavement Care, the leading national charity for bereaved people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, here we provide some advice for coping with loss and grief.

The death of someone close can be shattering. Everyone experiences grief differently; there is no 'normal' or 'right' way to grieve. How we react will be influenced by many different things, including our age and personality, our cultural background and religious beliefs, our previous experiences of bereavement and our personal circumstances.

It is important that you take care of yourself following a bereavement. One of the most helpful things is to talk about the person who has died and your relationship with them. Who you talk to will depend on you. It may be your family, friends, a faith or spiritual adviser, your GP or a support organisation.

Life will never be the same again after a bereavement, but the grief and pain should lessen and there will come a time when you are able to adapt and adjust and cope with life without the person who has died.

DON'T

- Isolate yourself (unless you have to, e.g. due to illness)
- Keep your emotions bottled up
- Think you are weak for needing help
- Feel guilty if you are struggling to cope
- Turn to drugs or alcohol – the relief will only be temporary

DO

- Talk to other people about the person who has died, about your memories and your feelings
- Look after yourself. Eat properly and try to get enough rest (even if you can't sleep)
- Give yourself time and permission to grieve
- Seek help and support if you feel you need it. Tell people what you need



Many people worry that they will forget the person who has died – how they looked, their voice, the good times they had together. There are so many ways you can keep their memory alive. These are just a few suggestions:

- Talk about them and your special memories
- Write down your memories
- Keep an album of photos and videos
- Keep a collection of some of their special possessions
- Do something that commemorates them, such as planting a tree, paying for a park bench, or making a donation to a charity

www.cruse.org.uk

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

A brain injury can cause enormous challenges for survivors and their loved ones. From the difficult initial stages of hospital treatment to returning home and coming to terms with the long-term effects of their injury, it is vital that people receive the information and support they need.

We asked members of our online communities about the biggest challenges they have faced after brain injury, and the steps they took to overcome them.



The man that speaks

Following a traumatic brain injury in August 2009, Shane Booth was left unable to speak for more than three months. His communication problems, paired with debilitating fatigue and mobility issues, have undoubtedly proven a challenge.



But more than a decade on from his accident, 45-year old Shane now spends his time talking to others about his experiences. His speech improved so much that in 2017, he embarked on a UK-wide tour delivering inspirational presentations as The Man That Speaks.

Talking about his role as an inspirational and motivational speaker, Shane said: "I hope to educate and inspire others. Just because you have a disability, it doesn't mean your life has to stop.

"I've always been driven by success so when my speech therapist suggested public speaking, I jumped at the idea.

"Having been a sales director for many years prior to the injury, communication played a huge part in my role. Having problems with my speech was incredibly frustrating.

"For three months following my accident I couldn't speak at all. Until one day I murmured the word 'mum'. Since then I began to say more and more, and now I'm speaking to huge crowds and sharing my story.

"The journey of learning to speak again has definitely been one of my proudest achievements."

Dr Anthony Scarfe

Anthony Scarfe was studying for a PhD in Particle Physics, when, in 2009, he sustained a hypoxic brain injury and was forced to put his studies on hold.



The circumstances of his injury are still unknown - he was found collapsed in his bedroom and had been lying on the floor for four days.

Since then, Anthony has gone on to finish his research work, write his thesis and complete his PhD, graduating in 2011.

My biggest challenges are my emotions and memory. I don't feel I have control over my emotions. I can get angry very quickly so then I keep to myself and either write or listen to music until I calm down.

– Anna Khan

Accepting that I actually had a brain injury and that this was the new me. I still miss the old me though.

– Sue French

Coping in social scenarios

For brain injury survivor Mel Whittaker, learning to cope in social situations has been the biggest challenge for her since her injury.



After experiencing a subarachnoid haemorrhage in 2011, she began struggling with sensory overload – the overstimulation of the body's senses.

Mel said: "People who have known me for a long time know me as highly social and gregarious. I loved being in pubs, bars and restaurants and with friends and family. But being in these situations now is so hard as I cannot cope with multiple stimuli and people talking over one another.

"Socialising, spending time with groups of people and attending meetings are all very challenging now. Likewise, eating out is not as pleasurable anymore and places that are crowded are too overwhelming."

Thankfully, Mel is able to use her Headway Brain Injury Identity Card in these difficult social scenarios.

"Although I have not overcome this challenge, I have learned to accept it and how to manage it," added Mel. "For example, I am less afraid to ask for music to be turned down in a venue or to be seated in a quiet place not surrounded by others. You have to accept things are different and then learn ways to make them work for you."

My biggest and so far most difficult challenge was to get to know myself after the accident and get to like myself again.

– Michael Tucker

"Yoga was still second nature to me"

Max Munro was just 22 when he sustained two near-fatal bleeds on his brain, a fracture to his skull and a number of broken bones.



However, it wasn't the therapy or rehabilitation that Max credits for his remarkable recovery, but instead his love for yoga.

"The doctors told me I'd never be able to walk again, but it wasn't until they saw me doing yoga that they realised how wrong they were."

Max said: "Yoga didn't just help me physically, but also mentally. I was

able to train my muscles and my mind at the same time."

During his two months in hospital, he even led a yoga class with some of his doctors and nurses.

"I had to learn how to walk and talk again, but yoga was still second nature to me," recalled Max.

"I knew that I had to carry on teaching yoga once I left the hospital, no matter how tough the challenges I faced would be."

A year on from his injury, Max is now teaching a number of yoga classes across the UK and campaigning to raise awareness of brain injury and its effects.

“Memory loss affects me more than anything else.”



Imogen Cauthery

After a brain haemorrhage in 2012, Imogen Cauthery began experiencing severe memory problems. As well as affecting her relationships and sense of identity, these memory problems had the biggest impact on her work and she eventually lost her job as a result.

Imogen, 33, said: “Memory loss affects me more than anything else. It is extremely debilitating because it affects everything in my life. Always getting lost, unable to recognise people and friends, forgetting daily plans and things I’ve done - it can be very embarrassing.”

Her journey with brain injury began 24 years ago in 1996 when at the age of just nine, she was hit by a car. Imogen was in a coma for two weeks and was left with memory impairment, learning difficulties and epilepsy.

She said: “Life went downhill, and I suffered a lot psychologically. Family life changed drastically; my sister and I were suddenly worst enemies and my parents were extremely overprotective and controlling.”

Fast forward 16 years to 2012, and Imogen underwent a brain operation to treat and control her epilepsy. Unfortunately, something went wrong during the procedure and she experienced a haemorrhage in her frontal lobe.

Both these injuries have had a huge impact on all aspects of Imogen’s life, but most notably, on her career.

She said: “A few years ago I worked for a postage company sorting and delivering post. I was slow at sorting the post because the departments had different codes and I couldn’t remember them - my colleagues would know these off by heart.

“Delivering was even harder and I couldn’t recognise the staff. Without knowing, I would often deliver things to the wrong people.”



Imogen as a child in hospital

“One day I was called in by the manager. She told me one of our clients had reported a lot of lost post and they knew it was because of my difficulties.

“She told me I was great to work with, reliable and kind but that this job wasn’t for me. She offered me another job filing envelopes, but I didn’t take it. I was extremely embarrassed and angry with my brain, constantly thinking that I had no future and would never get another job.”

Since then, Imogen has not been able to return to work but instead has taken up volunteering opportunities, including with local Headway groups and branches in her area.

“Volunteering with my local Headways massively helped with my confidence and depression,” she said. “It was good to get out and meet people who had gone through the same experiences.”

Imogen has also been supported by Headway’s helpline.

She said: “I’ve used the Headway helpline on a few occasions when I’ve been angry and upset about my situation. I also spoke to one of the nurses about career ideas and this was very helpful.

“I strongly recommend to all other brain injury survivors to use the helpline and try to meet others in the same shoes. It helps knowing that you’re not the only one going through this and speaking to someone who understands you truly does wonders.”

Over time, Imogen has found ways to manage her memory problems and says that setting alarms and writing everything down has been a big help. She hopes to continue volunteering with different organisations for years to come.



Imogen

Creative expression: Joseph McAloon

Joseph McAloon sustained a brain injury in 1975 when the motorcycle he was riding collided with a car, sending him through its rear window.

Here, we share one of Joseph's poems and ask him a few questions about his passion for creative writing.

How do your poems reflect your life after brain injury?

I can get emotional at times. I can get down, and I can be happy. Most of my poems are a reflection on how vulnerable I have become in relation to my brain injuries.

And how does writing help you?

To me, writing is often like crying without tears. I feel like every one is my achievement. They just come out of fresh air. I lost 90% of my vocabulary, and this means that my work misses out on a lot of beautiful words. I get lots of positive feedback from social media, but I wish I could sort them out.

If you could give one bit of advice to others affected by brain injury, what would it be?

You are still a person that should be treated with respect. Try to understand yourself and your limitations, because by doing this you can gain confidence.

The Two Of Me by Joseph McAloon

Who is this person looking at me in the mirror,
Is he some person that my life used to know?
I have been told to prepare for the changes
I can't find Joseph, tell me where did he go?

It seemed like a new world had just been created,
A place where there are things I can no longer do.
My daily life had now become really jumbled,
Making each day so much harder to get through.

My old friends have now turned into spaces,
I feel I'm stuck in the corner, and sat on my own.
If some them realised that I am still a person,
That wants to be loved so I am never alone.

I have a disability that makes me seem different,
And it is sometimes harder for me to survive.
Please remember my heart can still be broken,
But your understanding can help keep me alive.

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Anne Cahill



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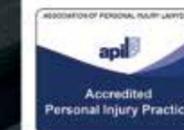
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For more information on how we can help, contact
Gary Smith, Head of Personal Injuries

Call free on 0800 019 0991

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Gary Smith is a member of Headway – the brain injury association's Personal Injury Solicitors list.



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