

Spring 2025

# Headway News



The magazine of Headway - the brain injury association

## *Headway's first ever Virtual Walking Challenge!*

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the soul**

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# HEADWAY WEBINARS



We are delighted to announce this year's Headway webinar programme, which is running for its third successive year!



Our webinars cover a range of topics, delivered by experts in their field, in support of rebuilding the lives of brain injury survivors.



## Things to know:

All our webinars are hosted on Zoom. Our webinars are free and open to all, including brain injury survivors, carers, family members, health and social care professionals, and anyone interested in the discussed topic.

Each session is 30 minutes long, followed by a 15-minute Q&A with the speaker.

The sessions are recorded and available to watch on our YouTube channel for those unable to attend the event.

## Upcoming sessions for 2025 include:

### **27th March: *Experiences and challenges faced by family members after brain injury***

Professor Charlie Whiffin, Professor of Nursing & Dr Alyson Norman, Associate Professor in Psychology

### **24th April: *Brain blood flow regulation after brain injury***

Dr Bert Bond, Senior Lecturer in Public Health and Sport Sciences & Dr Paul Weightman Potter, independent researcher

### **29th May: *Emotional lability***

Dr Warren Dunger, Clinical Neuropsychologist

### **26th June: *Head injury in the criminal justice system – in Scotland***

Dr Warren Dunger, Clinical Neuropsychologist

### **24th July: *Personality change after brain injury***

Professor Tom McMillan, Professor Emeritus

### **23rd October: *Post-traumatic stress disorder and brain injury***

Dr Lucilla Carlacci De Mattia, Clinical Psychologist

**For more information and to register interest, visit our website or use the QR code below.**





# Welcome

Welcome to the spring edition of Headway News.



Colin Morris

We are excited to bring you another packed edition of *Headway News*, filled with inspiring stories, informative features, and exciting updates from across the brain injury community

One of the most exciting events on the horizon is the *ABI Games*, taking place this August at the University of Worcester Arena. This free-to-enter event, led by Headway Worcester, is a celebration of different skills and abilities across the brain injury community. Whether you want to take part, cheer on participants, or simply be there for the incredible atmosphere, you can read more about it on page 9.

Innovation is at the heart of this edition. On page 8 we feature an initiative from Headway Suffolk, where staff and clients have come together to create an air fryer cookbook. With recipes created by staff and clients, the book is packed with simple, accessible recipes and, together with lots of photos, it is an easy-to-follow resource for brain injury survivors.

You can also find an innovative project from Headway's retail network in the form of the brand new Headway Vinted shop. This fresh approach to selling donated items online means we can reach customers across the UK, who

may not be within browsing distance of a Headway shop. The pilot, launched by the Headway shop in Sheffield, is already proving popular with fashionistas of all ages. Read all about it on page 23.

Looking to the future, Headway has started to review its website and we need your help! On page 17, find out how you can share your views on what works, what doesn't, and what you'd love to see on our new website.

In this issue, we also take a closer look at *ataxia* on page 18, exploring how it affects daily life, what support is available, and practical tips for managing symptoms.

Finally, on page 20, we feature a thought-provoking piece on the importance of being seen and accepted, and how this impacts the quality of life for brain injury survivors.

We hope you enjoy this edition. Happy reading!

Colin Morris  
Director of Communications



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](http://www.headway.org.uk) or you can call the freephone helpline on 0808 800 2244 if you need support.

## Go digital!

Subscribe to our monthly Headway News Bitesize email at:  
[headway.org.uk/join-our-mailing-list](http://headway.org.uk/join-our-mailing-list)

## Essential contacts

### Headway office:

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

### Telephone:

0115 924 0800  
[enquiries@headway.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@headway.org.uk)

### Nurse-led freephone helpline:

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

### Website:

[www.headway.org.uk](http://www.headway.org.uk)

### Advertising:

[CommunicationsTeam@headway.org.uk](mailto:CommunicationsTeam@headway.org.uk)

### Fundraising:

[community@headway.org.uk](mailto:community@headway.org.uk)

## Volunteer!

Would you like to help us improve lives after brain injury? You can join us today in our shops or at our events as a Headway Volunteer. Read more about volunteering on our website: [www.headway.org.uk/donate/volunteer](http://www.headway.org.uk/donate/volunteer)

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SAVE THE DATE

**ACTION FOR BRAIN  
INJURY WEEK 2025**

19-25 MAY

## What is ABI Week?

Every year around 350,000 people are admitted to hospital with an acquired brain injury. **That's one every 90 seconds.**

There are many ways people can acquire a brain injury, including through a fall, road traffic accident, an assault, a stroke, tumour, brain haemorrhage (and more). It can happen to anyone, at any time, and the effects can be devastating and permanent.

Headway – the brain injury association's annual awareness campaign, Action for Brain Injury Week, seeks to raise awareness and understanding of brain injury and gives a platform to brain injury survivors to tell their story.

## 2025

This year's theme, *On a good day*, is a campaign that highlights the hidden, fluctuating and unpredictable nature of brain injury. The campaign will highlight the gap between capabilities on a good day versus a bad day, showcasing how simple tasks can be achievable one day but impossible the next.

**ABI Week 2025 takes place  
from 19th – 25th May.**



# Your views

## The challenges and rewards of caring for those with brain injury

The effects of brain injury can be just as devastating for families as it is for individuals. It can change relationships in an instant, turning partners into carers and transforming the lives of entire families.

In recognition of Carers Week, taking place from 9th to 15th June 2025, we reached out to our online community to learn about the challenges and rewards they have faced while caring for someone with a brain injury.



I am a Support Worker for a lovely guy who suffered a traumatic brain injury, it is honestly a pleasure to be there for him and help him live his best life.

Laura



My wife certainly voiced that she felt very alone, as no one explained or came to check up on either me or, importantly, her, in the aftermath of my brain injury and my relatively short hospital stay.

RogerCMerriman – Health Unlocked



Challenge is sometimes encouraging my adult daughter to do something she says she doesn't want to do that day... the reward is later that day seeing her laugh and joke as though a light's switched on as she's sat with her friends, who help her through it.

Patrick

## Headway Carers Week Competition

To celebrate Carers Week we're giving you a chance to put your creative skills to good use.

**Step 1:** Write or record a poem, haiku or ditty that demonstrates your appreciation of your carers. We'd love to hear poems from a carer's perspective too.

**Step 2:** Send your entries, videos or quotes to [marie.peacock@headway.org.uk](mailto:marie.peacock@headway.org.uk)

**Step 3:** First, second and third places will all feature in Headway News, the Headway website and social media platforms. Videos will also appear on our social media throughout Carers Week.

The closing date for the competition is Sunday 4th May 2025.

Carers Week

9th - 15th June 2025



## Headway North Devon: Celebrating Jim

Headway North Devon recently held a party for volunteer Jim Issac, who was not only celebrating his 80th birthday, but over 30 years of volunteering too, having first set up the charity in the 90s.

Jo Nicholls, Voluntary Co-ordinator at Headway North Devon, said: "Jim is an amazing man. He is always cheerful, dependable, and refers to the group as 'one big happy family'.

Since forming Headway North Devon, Jim has done 'so much' for the group, from driving a mini bus so clients in rural areas could attend the day centre and taking some abroad on holiday, to arranging activities and even helping younger clients back into work and encouraging them to live well with a brain injury.

Jim has now retired from Headway North Devon celebrating his 80th birthday in February, although he still volunteers weekly and is still a stalwart of the group.

Jo added: "Headway North Devon would not be so successful if it was not for him. Thank you, Jim, from past and present clients and volunteers at Headway, for everything."



Jim with Headway client and friend Malcom green in the 90s and at his party in 2025.

## Headways in Scotland climb to Everest Base camp!

### "We conquered Everest Base Camp... recovering from a brain injury is a far bigger challenge!"

In November 2024, brain injury survivors from across Scotland took on one of the most famous and notoriously difficult expeditions on earth: climbing to Everest base camp.

Colin Robertson, from Headway Dundee and Angus said: "Going to Everest became a goal as my many cognitive problems – caused by a brain injury following an attack in 2004 – improved, including my short-term memory, my coordination and my balance to walk unaided.

"Behind it all was a challenge for myself to do it and to celebrate how far I've come in my recovery. More importantly, I

wanted to help raise awareness of brain injury as far and as wide as possible."

The 16-day expedition saw a team of 5 from Headways in Scotland take on the world-famous mountain range, providing living proof of what can be achieved.

"Some people thought I was mad having died twice and survived all the complications that I had and recovered to the extent I have. Why would I want to put my life at risk again?"

"I don't think that way. For me I'm extremely lucky to be alive and for that reason I want to make the most of my life. I've made it to where I am today with the huge package of care and support I got as well as never giving up."

Colin now hopes to return to Everest Base Camp each year with other people who have had a brain injury to keep raising awareness.

"I simply want to inspire others and show there can be life after brain injury," he said.

Head to [justgiving.com/campaign/headingtoeverest](https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/headingtoeverest) for more information.





# King's Award for Headway Northumberland

The volunteers of Headway Northumberland were awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service for 2024, marking the contribution they make every day to the lives of brain injury survivors in the region. This is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE.



The volunteers were celebrated at an event held at The Torch Centre in Hexham, where they received the award crystal and certificate from Dr Caroline Pryer, Lord-Lieutenant of Northumberland with the citation being read by Carol Malia of BBC North East.

David Howcroft, member, volunteer and Trustee said: "Headway Northumberland provides a relaxed and safe environment that allows me to make progress".



David Howcroft

## Honoring Julia and Clive

Congratulations to Julia and Clive Davies from Headway Swansea who have been recognised in the UK Parliament Early Day Motions (EDM), detailing their extensive volunteering with Headway Swansea.

brain injury survivors and 'significant' fundraising efforts over their years with Headway Swansea.

EDMs are used by MPs in the Commons to draw the attention of the House to a particular issue, event or campaign. For Julia and Clive, the motion recognizes their 35 years of volunteer dedication to Headway Swansea, supporting



## Recognition for Headway Trustee, Andy Tyerman

Congratulations once again to Headway trustee Andy Tyerman, who was awarded the Monte Shapiro Lifetime Achievement Award by the British Psychological Society, 'in celebration of people with brain injury and those that support them.'

Andy is pictured here at the British Empire Medal investiture in Buckinghamshire in November 2024, receiving the medal from the Lord Lieutenant.





# Network News

## Feeding the Soul with Headway Suffolk

In 2023, Headway Suffolk was successful in gaining Lottery funding from their cost-of-living fund and, as part of this project, they purchased 100 air fryers which they donated to their service users at the charity.

CEO Helen Fairweather explains: "The rationale for this was that they were economical to use and safe for people who have poor memory. We were able to teach our community how to use the air fryers and, along the way, both clients and staff developed many original recipes."

Part of the funding included the production of an air fryer cook book which was finally published in November 2024.

Helen added: "The cookbook took quite a long time to produce as every

stage - for all the recipes - had to be photographed in such a way that people who cannot read, or who find it difficult to follow written instructions, could follow the photographs.

"We used large print so that people with visual problems could follow them too."

Each recipe featured explains why it is a healthy choice, and some even link with other recipes, allowing the reader to put together a complete meal. The best bit? The recipes are named after either staff or clients at Headway Suffolk, truly celebrating their creations with pride.

So far, Headway Suffolk have sold over 150 copies across the UK, and a few even made it as far as Switzerland and New York.

Helen concluded: "Our clients and staff had great fun working on the book and it's a real testament to their spirit."

*"If you buy it, you'll see that CEO's Delight is remarkably like sticky toffee pudding! It's a treat for any CEO who is busy running a Headway group."*

To order your own copy of Headway Suffolk's Air Fryer Cookbook, contact [helenmfairweather@headwaysuffolk.org.uk](mailto:helenmfairweather@headwaysuffolk.org.uk).

Price: £10 (+£2.50 postage)





# The ABI Games 2025

20th August 2025 at

The University of Worcester Arena

*“I shed a tear when reflecting on all of the happiness, friendships and achievements made over the two days at our last ABI Games in 2023.”*

Mandie Fitzgerald, CEO Headway Worcestershire

## What are the ABI Games?

The ABI Games are a FREE to enter event, led by Headway Worcestershire, to showcase amazing abilities of our acquired brain injury (ABI) community in the UK and a fantastic opportunity for Headway charities from all corners to come together, to watch and support, or take part!

## How can I participate?

Register online via the ABI Games website [www.abigames.org](http://www.abigames.org), where you'll find all necessary information about signing up as an individual or a team, or call the Headway Worcestershire fundraising team on 01905 729729.

## Can I raise sponsorship money for my Headway group or chosen charity?

Yes, we encourage individual participants from all Headway charities and branches throughout the UK to raise sponsorship to support your chosen charity. This will help with any costs associated with your participation on the day, such as care support or transport costs. Your charity will be able to support you with this.

Set up a personal or group fundraising page on platforms like JustGiving or GoFundMe making it easy for people to donate. Share your page on social media and by email to reach more supporters!

## Can I still participate if I don't raise sponsorship money?

Absolutely! While raising sponsorship money is encouraged, we welcome all participants who want to be a part of this special day. Your support is valuable whether competing or supporting others.

If you take part in a physical activity, to reduce and avoid injury, please check first with your doctor. Be aware to allow enough time for recuperation after the event due to fatigue. We encourage you to download and read the brochure from [abigames.org/abi-games-2025/](http://abigames.org/abi-games-2025/).

## What if I can't attend the event but still want to contribute?

If you can't attend, there are still many ways to support the cause! Donate directly to Headway Worcestershire, your local Headway or sponsor someone who is participating. Every contribution counts.

## Questions?

**Email:** [abigames@hwtl.org.uk](mailto:abigames@hwtl.org.uk)

**Call:** 01905 729729

**We're looking forward to a fun, successful day, full of community spirit! Thank you for your support, and we can't wait to see you at the event.**





# ADVOCATING FOR SURVIVORS IN WESTMINSTER

Following last year's election, some of the team from Headway – the brain injury association met with parliamentarians from the main political parties in Westminster, highlighting the issues that matter to brain injury survivors.

Headway Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Richard Wood, explains: "In December, we were the charity of choice for the Parliament Politics Magazine Awards at the House of Commons, where I had the opportunity to address 15 parliamentarians.

"I also spoke one-on-one with MPs about issues affecting the Headway network and brain injury survivors. "This included the need for improved access to neurorehabilitation support,

better funded local services, and the financial pressures faced by local independent Headway charities, including upcoming National Insurance changes."

In January, Headway also joined the Neurological Alliance parliamentary reception, to encourage parliamentarians old and new to back the 1 in 6 people living with neurological conditions.

Richard added: "This was another important opportunity for us to speak with MPs and hear from allies in other neuro charities."

The reception took place ahead of the first ever UK Neuro Forum, which will bring together the Department for Health and Social Care, NHS England, devolved governments and Neurological Alliances of all four UK nations.



Picture courtesy of the Parliament Politics Magazine Long-standing Parliamentary Champion Sir John Hayes (left) and Headway's Policy and Public Affairs Manager (right) at December's Awards.



## Ask your MP to meet with Headway and become a brain injury Parliamentary Champion

Do you believe your MP should speak up for brain injury survivors in parliament?

Headway's Parliamentary Champions are committed to

work alongside us to increase understanding of brain injury and lobby for change to make the country a better place for those living with acquired brain injury.

Scan the QR code or visit [www.members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP](http://www.members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP) to write to your MP today. Contact **Richard.Wood** @[headway.org.uk](mailto:headway.org.uk) for support.



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# BACK ON THE SLOPES

## Olivia's Remarkable Recovery

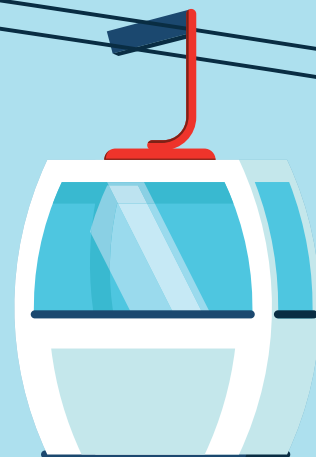
Just one year ago, Olivia Corbiere was given a mere 5% chance of survival after a horrific skiing accident in Bulgaria. The South Yorkshire woman suffered multiple severe injuries including a fractured spine, pelvis, and a bleed on the brain after she plunged into a ravine during a holiday with friends.

Her road to recovery was gruelling. Olivia spent 39 days in hospitals in Bulgaria and Sheffield, but thanks to the support of her family, friends, and Headway Rotherham, she has defied the odds in extraordinary fashion.

Determined not to let fear hold her back, Olivia recently returned to the very slopes where her life nearly ended. "Why should you let fears control your life?" she says. "I'm so lucky to be alive. The neurosurgeon saved my life, as did my friends by jumping into that ravine and pulling me out. You can never say thank you enough."

Throughout her recovery, Headway Rotherham has played a vital role in helping Olivia rebuild her confidence. The charity's social groups provided a space where she could meet others who understood the challenges of brain injury. "Brain injury can be really isolating," she reflects, "but with the help of others, you realise you are not defined by it. Life is short—don't let it hold you back."

Now back at work as a kitchen designer, Olivia is embracing every opportunity that comes her way and this year she is setting off on a backpacking adventure, determined to live the life she almost lost as she refuses to let brain injury stand in the way of her dreams.





# WORLD ORAL HEALTH DAY

## 20th March 2025

Get your smiles ready because 20th March marks World Oral Health Day, a day for bright smiles, toothy grins, and most importantly... awareness of oral health.

It is important for everyone to maintain good oral hygiene, as we use our mouth for many everyday activities such as eating, speaking and smiling. While poor oral health can therefore affect our ability to eat, speak and socialise, it can also lead to health problems and affect self-esteem.

The effects of brain injury can interfere with the ability to maintain good oral health:

- Cognitive issues may affect a survivor's ability to remember to brush their teeth, clean their tongue or floss as part of their dental routine.
- Anxiety may cause survivors to worry about visiting their dentist.
- Mobility issues may cause difficulties with using hands or arms to maintain oral hygiene.

### TOP TIPS FOR BRAIN INJURY SURVIVORS WHEN MAINTAINING ORAL HYGIENE

**Brush your teeth twice a day, for at least 2 minutes**

*If you struggle...*

- Explore adaptive toothbrushes, with larger brushing areas or better grip.
- Write instructions down for the order you need to clean your mouth in and stick it somewhere visible, such as on your bathroom mirror.
- Use a timer to set 2 minutes so that you can keep track of how long you have brushed for.
- Contact your local adult social care team if you need help with self-care, such as brushing your teeth.

**Maintain a healthy lifestyle, such as reducing sugar, alcohol and caffeine**

*If you struggle...*

- Seek guidance from your GP about how to maintain a healthy lifestyle or visit NHS' Live Well webpage at [www.nhs.uk/live-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well).
- See our publication *Alcohol after brain injury* for tips on reducing alcohol intake after brain injury.

**Visit your dentist regularly**

*If you struggle...*

- Take your Headway Brain Injury Identity Card to appointments to ensure you get the right support.
- Learn deep breathing and relaxation techniques, or seek professional support for anxiety you may feel.
- Explain your concerns to your dentist – they can work with you to reduce your worries.



# The power of laughter



## How laughter therapy can boost wellbeing

Laughter is often said to be the best medicine, and research increasingly supports its positive effects on both physical and mental health. For Neurological Physiotherapist Anna Hatchard, laughter therapy has become a vital tool in supporting wellbeing and resilience.

After attending Anna's *Laughter Lab* seminars, Headway's Digital Communications Manager, Gemma, had the pleasure of meeting Anna to find out more about the positive impact of laughter.

### From physiotherapy to positive psychology

"My name is Anna, and I have been a neurological physiotherapist for over forty years. I was also a clinical teacher of post graduate physiotherapists in how to deal with neurological conditions.

"After 20 years working in the NHS, I identified a gap in long-term rehabilitation for individuals recovering from neurological brain injuries, strokes, spinal cord injuries, all sorts of things. I knew that unfortunately people were not getting the amount of rehabilitation that they needed to fulfil their potential on the NHS, so in 1997 I started a private neurological physiotherapy practice dedicated to helping people to access longer term rehabilitation and maximise their recovery.

"In 2017, I transitioned into the field of Applied Positive Psychology, studying what makes people flourish. I explored concepts such as hope, resilience, and positive emotions, which ultimately led me to research the power of laughter in wellbeing."

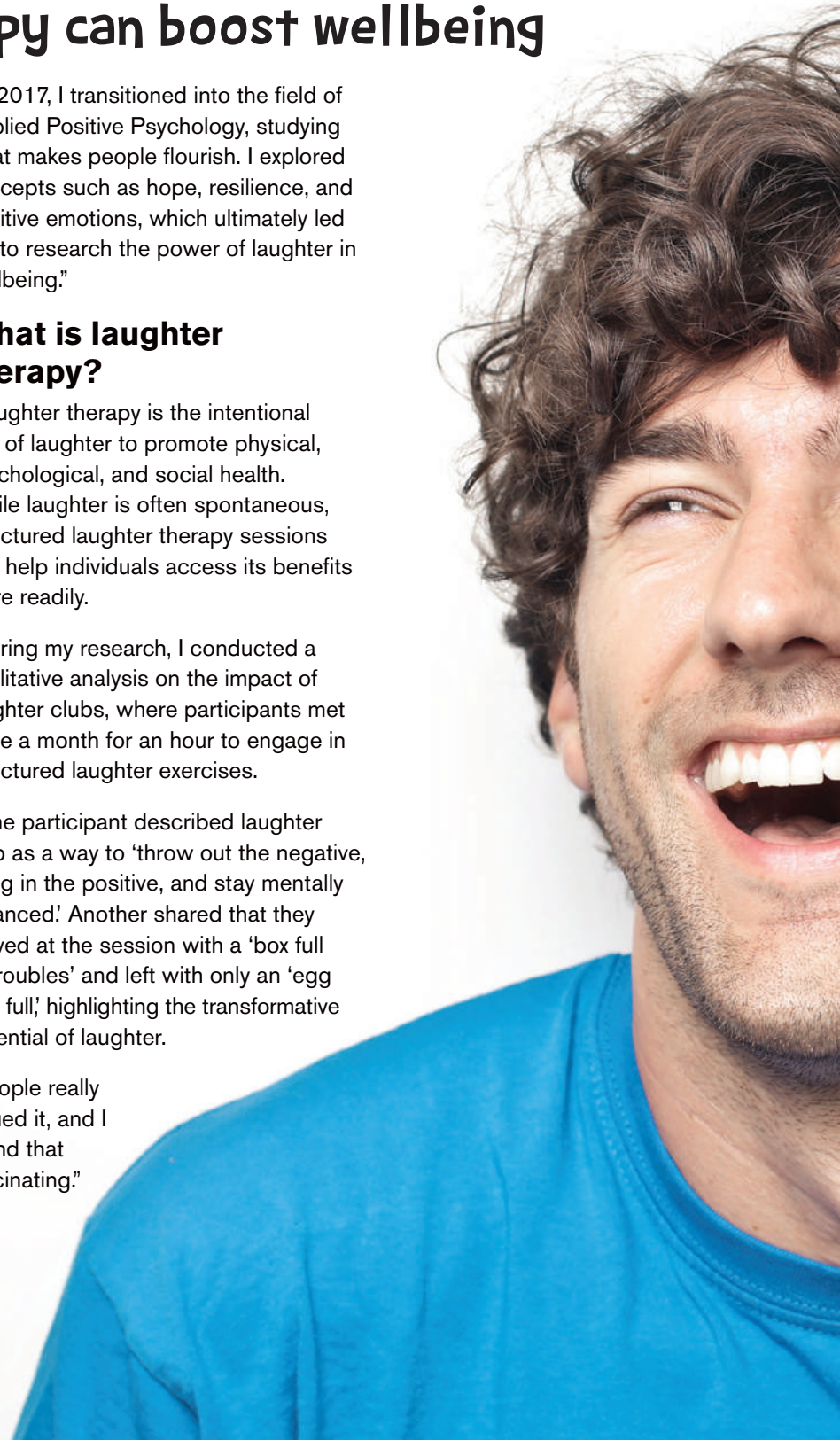
### What is laughter therapy?

"Laughter therapy is the intentional use of laughter to promote physical, psychological, and social health. While laughter is often spontaneous, structured laughter therapy sessions can help individuals access its benefits more readily.

"During my research, I conducted a qualitative analysis on the impact of laughter clubs, where participants met once a month for an hour to engage in structured laughter exercises.

"One participant described laughter club as a way to 'throw out the negative, bring in the positive, and stay mentally balanced!' Another shared that they arrived at the session with a 'box full of troubles' and left with only an 'egg cup full,' highlighting the transformative potential of laughter.

"People really valued it, and I found that fascinating."





## The science behind laughter and wellbeing

Laughter therapy is backed by science. Studies suggest that laughter can:

- **Reduce stress and anxiety**
  - Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals, which help reduce stress and even mild depression.
- **Enhance physical health**
  - Known as 'internal jogging,' laughter stimulates respiratory, and core muscles, improves circulation, and can even increase pain tolerance.
- **Boost mood and resilience**
  - Engaging in laughter makes it difficult to dwell on negative thoughts and brings you into the present – much like mindfulness, creativity, or meditation.
- **Support heart health** – Research shows that individuals recovering from heart attacks who watch comedy for 30 minutes a day experience fewer recurrences and better overall health.
- **A universal human behaviour**
  - Laughter is cross cultural and you don't need to understand language to join in, so it's really accessible and it's free to everybody.

### How to incorporate laughter into daily life

Anna shares practical tips for making laughter a habit:

- **Treat laughter like medicine**
  - Make time for comedy, whether through stand-up, sitcoms, or funny videos.
- **Seek out laughter** – Surround yourself with people who make you laugh, recall past moments of joy and look for the lighter side of everyday life.
- **Try laughter exercises** – Close your eyes and force yourself to laugh for 10–15 seconds; often, fake laughter turns genuine

**Use auditory triggers** – Record your own laughter and play it back when needed. Laughter is contagious, so even listening to others laugh can have a positive effect.

- **Associate laughter with daily habits** – Laugh in the shower, while waiting for the kettle to boil, or while washing your hands.
- **Reduce negative influences**
  - Limit exposure to distressing news or social media content that drains your energy.
- **Use your phone** - Pretend you're with somebody else on the end of the phone, and simply just laugh.
- **Laughing for no reason** - it might sound a bit weird, but actually it is an easy thing to do.

### Laughter Lab

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Anna founded Laughter Lab, offering free online laughter sessions twice a week, welcoming over 200 participants. Now, she continues her research into the link between laughter and creativity, exploring how it can further enhance cognitive and emotional wellbeing.

"Laughter is a simple, accessible, and powerful tool for improving mental health. Laughter is a great tool in your wellbeing toolbox– we all have it at our fingertips, but you need to take it out and use it."

For more information about Laughter Lab and to explore Anna's research, visit [oxford-review.com](http://oxford-review.com)



# SERVICES SPOTLIGHT: Headway publications

Headway's charity mission is to improve the lives of those affected by acquired brain injury. Given the range of challenges that brain injury survivors and carers face, we know that this is a big undertaking. At the heart of our activity is our range of services, that work towards achieving this mission and providing the guidance, support and information so often needed.

In this feature, we take a look at some of our core services, starting off with our publications.

## What are the Headway publications?

Headway's publications are a collection of freely downloadable information PDFs that cover topics relating to how life can be affected by brain injury. Broad categories include about brain injury, effects of brain injury, employment and education, family issues and relationships, legal issues, practical issues and welfare benefits. Several of Headway's more popular publications are also available as printed A5 booklets.

## How do the Headway publications help people?

After a brain injury, many people face huge changes to their life. The publications offer guidance on these changes to help people feel informed, so that they can better understand themselves, the changes they are experiencing, and how to cope with

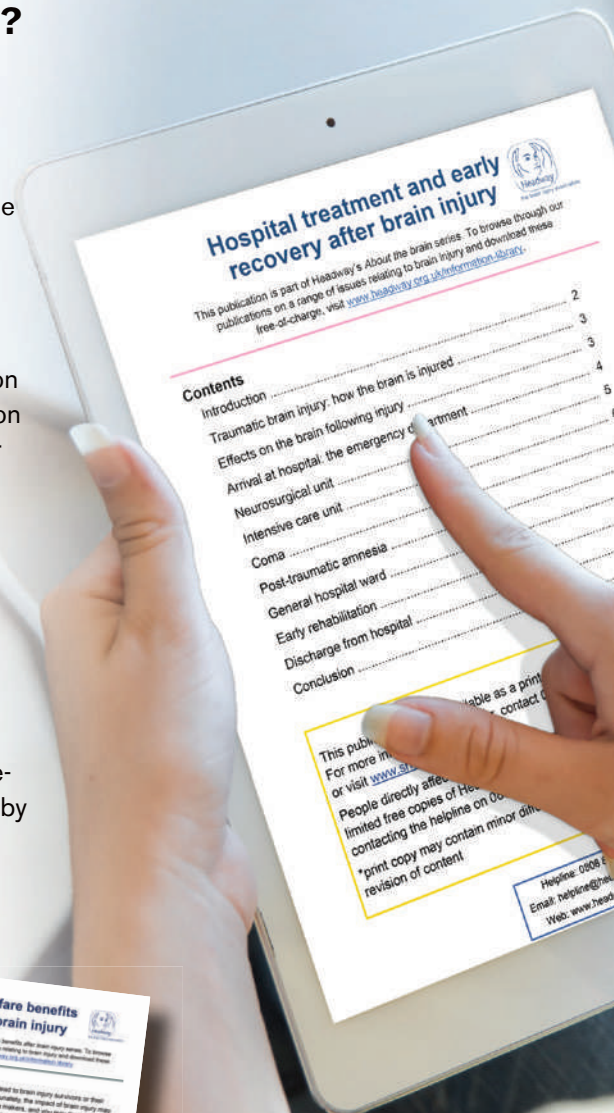
the changes. Self-help tips are offered, as well as guidance for accessing professional support.

## How are the Headway publications developed?

Key topics of relevance to the brain injury community are identified and researched before information is drafted. Brain injury survivors and professionals are consulted to provide input and feedback. The publications are then produced, with future plans aiming to include the simultaneous creation of accessible publications. Users are invited to share feedback on all publications through our publication feedback survey or by contacting our Publications and Research Manager.

## How can I access the Headway publications?

Headway's publications are free to download from Headway Information Library, at [www.headway.org.uk/information-library](http://www.headway.org.uk/information-library). Limited copies of printed A5 booklets are available free-of-charge to people directly affected by brain injury, or to purchase for £3.50 each by professionals or others.







# A new website for Headway: Share your views

Launched in 2015, our current website has been a hub for the charity over the last decade, helping to provide vital information and support to those affected by brain injury, while supporting our broader work to build partnerships and raise awareness.

Following the recent launch of our new five-year plan, and to reflect changes in the way people search for and consume information online, we think now is the time to build a new website that can support Headway for years to come.

As with everything we do, we'd like to put you, our community, at the heart of the redesign. So whether you have a brain injury yourself, know someone who does, work in the field of brain injury or simply have an interest in our work, we'd love to hear from you.

Complete our survey to share your views: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/headwaywebsitefeedback](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/headwaywebsitefeedback). or scan the QR code.

Thank you for your support!





# ATAXIA

## after brain injury

Each day, we rely on numerous bodily movements to get up, get dressed, make our breakfasts, go out, interact with others, do the shopping, and any number of other such daily activities.

Many people know that it is our muscles that are responsible for our body moving, but the brain also plays a vital part in this by coordinating the movement of muscles. When the brain gets injured, the ability to coordinate muscles may be affected, which can affect different types of movement. This is called ataxia.



Ataxia is the name for a group of disorders in which the brain's ability to control muscles becomes disrupted. Ataxia can cause difficulties with many skills and can affect various aspects of life.



## What skills does Ataxia affect?

Ataxia affects movement, balance and co-ordination, which all rely on muscular control. Ataxia can therefore cause issues with:

- **Walking**
- **Vision**
- **Speech**
- **Swallowing**
- **Continance (bladder and bowel functions)**
- **Using one's hands for activities such as eating, dressing or writing**



Vision relies on movement of muscles around the eyes. Even when we think our eyes are still, they are constantly moving back and forth to process the world around us. A brain injury can affect the control of these muscular movements, which can cause a range of visual problems that contribute to ataxia.

Similarly, speech, swallowing and continence are all functions that rely on muscular control. If parts of the brain responsible for controlling these muscles get injured, these functions can be disrupted. For example, some people experience dysarthria, which is a difficulty with speech, and/or dysphagia, a difficulty with swallowing. Ataxia can cause muscles to spasm, which can be uncomfortable or painful to live with.

## Where can someone get support for living with ataxia?

Ataxia can cause a wide range of issues. The professional best suited to support a brain injury survivor with ataxia will therefore depend on the specific issues the survivor experiences. Some of the professionals that may be able to help are as follows:



- **Physiotherapists** - to help with movement issues
- **Speech and language therapists** - to help with speech and swallowing issues
- **Occupational therapists** - to help with accessing and using adaptive equipment, and learning adaptive ways of completing activities
- **Nurses** - to administer and monitor medication
- **Continance specialists** - to help with continence (bladder and bowel function) issues
- **Neuropsychologists or clinical psychologists** - to help with the emotional, cognitive or behavioural impact of brain injury

If the survivor's ataxia is causing difficulties with day-to-day living, their GP or neurologist may be able to refer them to an Ataxia centre, clinic or a professional specialist in ataxia.

More information on accessing professional support is available on Ataxia UK's website at [www.ataxia.org.uk](http://www.ataxia.org.uk).

## How can someone cope with ataxia?

- Get support - for instance, professional support, support from agencies to help with aspects of your life that you are struggling with, and/or support from charities such as Headway and Ataxia UK.
- Keep walkways clear to avoid tripping. Consider installing grab rails for safety.
- Speak to your GP about symptoms of ataxia that you are struggling with. They may be able to prescribe helpful medication or provide referrals to relevant services. For instance, there may be specialist clinics nearby that your GP can refer you to, such as spasticity clinics, continence clinics or pain clinics.
- Consider deep breathing exercises to help with calming the body.
- Explore adaptive equipment that can help you with managing day-to-day life, such as mobility aids, adaptive kitchen equipment or walking aids.
- Discuss helpful exercises with a physiotherapist to help with balance and gait issues.
- Explore adapted activities, such as accessible holidays or adapted sports.
- Be honest with others in your life about how you are feeling, as they may not understand how your brain injury has affected you, especially if your symptoms are not visible to others. Talk to others about your experiences, your feelings, and how they can best support you.
- Avoid drinking alcohol if possible, as this may worsen ataxia issues such as balance, speech and gait. Alcohol is generally discouraged after brain injury as a brain injury can reduce one's tolerance to it.

For more information on ataxia after brain injury, visit our Information Library and download our new publication *Ataxia after brain injury*.



QUALITY OF LIFE FEATURE

**BEING  
SEEN  
AND  
ACCEPTED**

**20** Call our nurse-led freephone helpline **0808 800 2244**



'Quality of life' (QoL) is a term often used in healthcare literature, but what does it mean?

A simple definition is offered by Britannica: *"The degree to which an individual is **healthy, comfortable, and able to participate in or enjoy life events.**"*

QoL can be affected by difficult life events, such as a brain injury. Many brain injury survivors and their carers report QoL worsening in various ways, such as feeling isolated, being less able to do things independently, or being unable to enjoy hobbies.

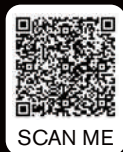
So what can help to improve QoL after brain injury? A team of researchers recently investigated seven priorities of QoL for traumatic brain injury survivors and here we discuss one identified as being a key priority for QoL:

### **Being seen and accepted**

Adjusting to life after brain injury can be challenging, but having others in your life who recognise and accept the changes can be a big help. Having the effects of brain injury understood and accommodated for can make a difference to survivors' social lives, experience at work, relationships and their daily interactions with the wider world.

Unfortunately, for many, 'being seen' can produce a challenge in itself when the brain injury and its effects are 'invisible'. For this reason, brain injuries are often referred to as a 'hidden disability'.

To find out more about the QoL research referred to in this article, visit our website or scan the QR code.



## **SO HOW CAN ONE MAKE THE INVISIBLE, VISIBLE?**

"First of all you have to understand how it affects YOU, this takes time, tears, honesty and professional neurology rehab. Then and only then can you manage it and tell others how it is."

Mike Palmer

"I show people my Headway ID card. I explain that I may have difficulty doing or understanding some things!"

Russ H Aitkins

"Education for those around you and showing them who you are with your new you. Become a pro about what's triggers you off and learn coping strategies and share this with everyone around you. It takes time, patience, understanding and care."

Lorna Ann Walker

"It's always easier sharing with the friends I have met through Headway. You don't have to explain issues to them. For the others I try & use examples. The between Christmas & New Year period was helpful as explanation of me now. Asked friends to be thinking of that betwixt week when you're not sure what day it is, if / when you should be at work, who you are supposed to meet today, etc.... Told them that feeling is mine several times every day of the year. It surprised some of them for sure."

Nemo24

"My friendship group has always hosted a Christmas dinner party during which we each give a short presentation on what we're up to in our lives...For me, this year was the ideal opportunity to walk everyone through my brain injury in a friendly and informal way with a mix of humour and sincerity."

Alex L

"I refer them to your (Headway) site, it's less stressful than going through it myself as I find it depressing to have to explain over and over again!"

Linda Edwards

# The SOUND of MUSIC



After receiving a £20,000 grant from the National Lottery Fund, Creative Arts Music specialist Sophie Garner shares how she's impacting brain injury survivors all over the country with her inspiring new project.



## How did you get involved with Headway?

I've been a singer all of my life and I fell into the world of teaching singing and music. A student's mother heard me singing through the wall and invited me to her ABI unit. I started running weekly sessions there, and the clients loved it! This led to my work with Headway Bedford, where I've been for over six years. This inspired me to study for my master's, researching the benefits of group singing for brain injury recovery.

## You've created a welcoming and fun space over the years for your support group, you all must have a great bond?

It feels like a family and a second home. Everyone is incredibly open and honest with each other, which creates a beautiful space for support.

## Can you tell us more about your new project, Sing & Social and why you created it?

I wanted to create a space where people with brain injuries and their carers can come together, having noticed how many survivors experience depression when going home after spending time in ABI units.

I set up my own community interest company, (Take a Deep Breath CIC), and, with my grant from the Lottery Community Fund, Sing & Social was born. At the sessions, it's a fun interactive group where we write songs, engage in music quizzes, and do fun, uplifting projects that fire up the neurons. It's also about allowing people to identify with the music they love. I've had a lovely husband and

wife online singing together and it's just been so joyful, and they've learnt a lot about each other from it. It's been quite emotional to see that.

## What are some of the benefits of singing for brain injury survivors?

There's so many! It increases lung capacity, reduces blood pressure, boosts the immune system, reduces inflammation and improves memory. It also releases endorphins and serotonin, all happy hormones.



Also, when a group of people sing together their heart rates match up, isn't that lovely?

Sophie's weekly online sessions are free and run every Friday. To join, simply email Sophie at [info@takeadeepbreath.org.uk](mailto:info@takeadeepbreath.org.uk) to book your place.



# Headway on Vinted

This year, the Retail team at Headway – the brain injury association are exploring new ways of reaching shoppers across the UK and raising vital funds to support Headway’s work improving life after brain injury.

We spoke to Liam O’Connor, Manager at Headway’s Sheffield shop, about the project.

## What’s the big news?

We’re on Vinted! While our physical store remains a key part of our community, selling online allows us to reach a much larger audience, attract new supporters and extend the lifespan of quality second hand items. It’s a great way for more people to be able to support us, even if they aren’t able to visit us in person!

## How did it come about?

We wanted and needed to find new ways to reach more people beyond our Sheffield store and make the most of our existing quality stock. Vinted provided the perfect platform to sell our items online, helping us to not only connect with new customers but also raise more funds to support those affected by brain injuries. It felt like the natural next step for us.

## Why should people buy from Headway’s Vinted store?

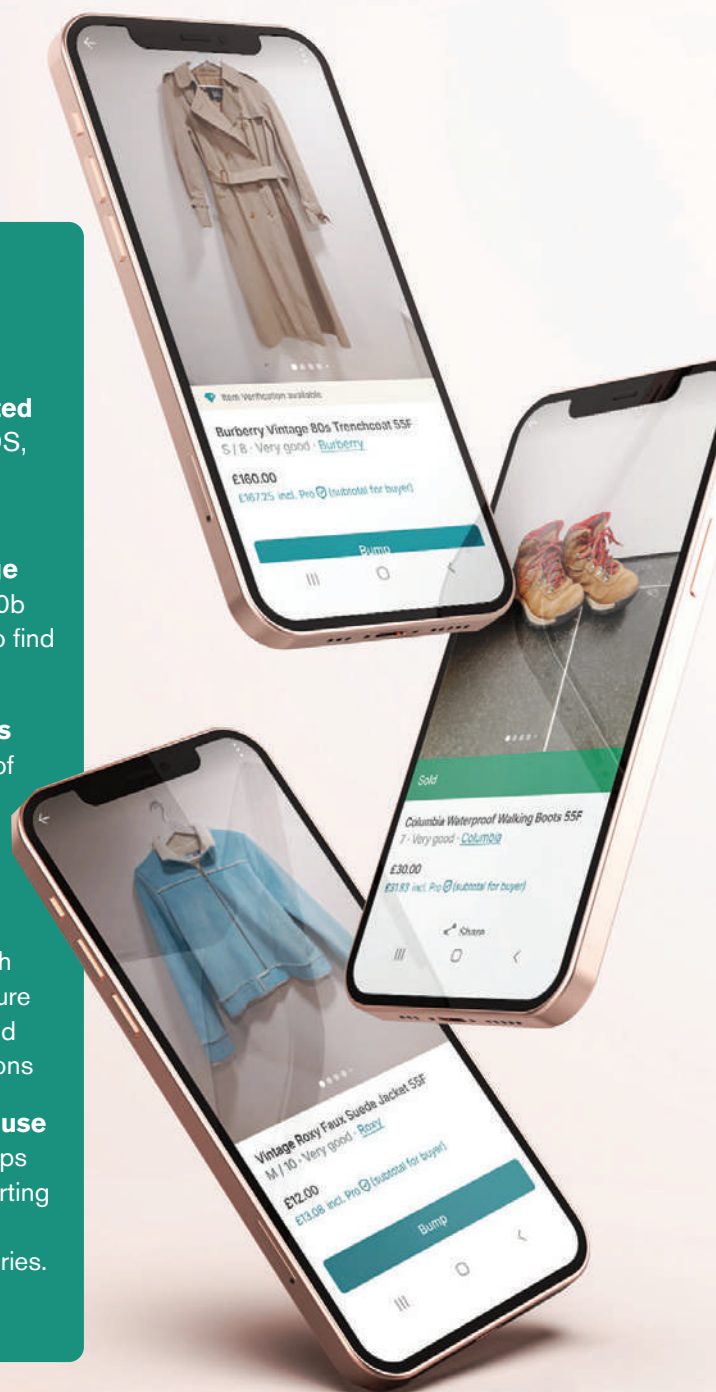
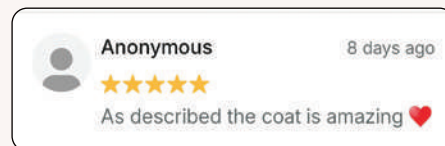
Buying from our vinted store is a great way to find quality second hand items at affordable prices while supporting a vital cause. Every purchase helps fund

our work with people affected by brain injuries, plus it’s a sustainable way to shop and an easy and convenient way for supporters to browse and buy from us no matter where they are.

We’re very proud to be pioneering this approach and hope it can inspire other Headway stores in the future!

## How to visit Headway’s Vinted store

- 1. Download the Vinted app** - available on iOS, Android or visit [www.vinted.co.uk](http://www.vinted.co.uk)
- 2. Search for our page** – type Headway\_190b into the search bar to find our online store
- 3. Browse our listings** – explore our range of quality second hand clothing and accessories
- 4. Make a purchase** – buy directly through Vinted with their secure payment methods and simple shipping options
- 5. Support a great cause** – every purchase helps fund our work supporting people and families affected by brain injuries.



# ANGELA'S ADVENTURE FOR HEADWAY



Photo courtesy of Spinerace Media Team

On January 13th, Headway fundraiser Angela White took part in the Spine Challenger North— a 160 mile, non-stop race along the Pennine Way - battling everything the British weather could throw at her in wintery sub-zero temperatures.

She did so all in support of Headway South Cumbria, a charity close to her heart, who supported her family through difficult times. Here she tells us of her motivations, and the natural beauty she found along the way.

*“It was a gruelling challenge, but I set off determined.”*

Angela's son was injured in 2024 leaving a family wedding. The venue's exit was poorly lit and, while carrying a crate of gifts that obscured his vision, he tripped over an unprotected low wall at shin height. He fell and hit his head - initially stopping breathing.

Angela recalls: “After I opened his airway, he remained unconscious for 5-6 minutes. There were some personality changes upon regaining consciousness. At the hospital, scans confirmed a brain haemorrhage.”

Though decompression wasn't needed, her son stayed several days for neurological observation.

“His recovery over the following six months was gradual,” Angela added. “We're extremely grateful that he has largely returned to his former self.”

Angela sought advice from Headway South Cumbria the day after the accident.

“Headway's guidance was invaluable when I needed it the most, and I wanted to express my gratitude,” she said.





## Re-defining retirement

Angela's expression of gratitude came in the form of The Spine Challenger, an incredible endurance race along the 'backbone of England' – one of many challenges Angela has taken on in recent years.

"At 53, I found ultrarunning," Angela explains. "Not through talent, but through discipline and a desire to explore my limits. This journey became more than a sport; it symbolized personal growth and human potential."

The journey also came with extra hurdles for Angela – known as 'The Running Granny' – as she underwent knee surgery in 2024.

"This was probably one of the toughest challenges I've done - although each one has its moments where you have to dig deep for one reason or another," she said.

*"However, I felt up to the job (not physically as the knee injury and recent surgery meant I hadn't been able to train in the way I would have liked and that limited me!), but I felt mentally capable of dealing with any issues that arose because of the experience I've gained over the years."*



Photo courtesy of Spinerace Media Team

## Helping Headway's mission

Angela was as determined to support Headway as she was to take on the adventure in the Pennines.

She said: "The immediate care our family received after a brain injury in our family, from the NHS ambulance service and Stoke Mandeville Hospital, was excellent, but we quickly learned that the journey doesn't end there."

"For many, the transition from acute care to life beyond is marked by gaps in support. In South Cumbria, these gaps are particularly wide. Our local hospital hasn't had a neurology consultant for over two years, with services provided out of county and waiting lists now exceeding 735 days."

"That's where Headway South Cumbria (HWSC) steps in, and that's why I was keen to do what I could to support."

HWSC offers vital guidance, practical help, and a lifeline for families navigating the complexities of brain injury recovery.

"Their work makes a tangible difference, and I wanted to give back by raising funds to help them continue their mission."

Angela said the best bits of the race come down to the supporters – the 'indefatigable' volunteers, the other runners you 'share moments with', safety teams, or those who just come along to support. She also highlighted 'natural phenomena' as a big part of the experience.

"One night, alone on Hadrian's Wall, a burnt orange glow in the distance had me transfixed as the moon then rose, silhouetting the wall," Angela elaborates.

"No one to see it apart from me and, maybe joined just for a moment across the centuries, the Roman legionnaires who once patrolled the Wall."

"These moments are not just witnessed but earned simply by showing up and they have a way of leaving you feeling infinitesimally small but full of gratitude."

As to the hardest part?

"Finishing is always difficult," Angela said. "The end of the adventure, a bit like a bubble bursting!"

You can read all about Angela's challenges on her website, [therunninggranny.co.uk](https://therunninggranny.co.uk)



# Headway's first ever Virtual Walking Challenge!

**WALK**  
**90** KM  
**IN FEBRUARY**



February 2025 saw our very first virtual challenge of walking 90km in the month, to support Headway – the brain injury association. Over 800 people registered for the challenge, with 50% of these actively fundraising!

The money raised from this challenge will support Headway's essential services, including:

- The **Headway website:** Providing information and resources for those affected by brain injury.
- The **Headway Emergency Fund:** Offering financial support to families in the immediate aftermath of a brain injury, helping them visit loved ones in hospitals often far from home.
- **Headway's free and confidential helpline:** Supporting over 10,000 callers each year with guidance, reassurance, and advice during some of their most challenging times.

*“A huge thank you to everyone who took on the 90km in February walking challenge for Headway – the brain injury association. Your fundraising efforts mean the world to us and enable us to continue our work to support individuals and families affected by brain injury.”*

Holly Howey, Events Manager at Headway

At time of writing our virtual challenge has raised over **£63,000!**

Together, our fundraisers have walked over **21,000km!**





# Why I fundraise for Headway - and how you can too!

Hi, I'm Katie – and I'm proud to be part of Team Headway. Last year, I ran a 10k to raise funds for Headway, and it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I didn't just raise money; I raised awareness about brain injury and saw how every pound makes a difference.



## Why fundraise for Headway?

Brain injury can happen in an instant – and it can change lives forever. Headway is there to help survivors, and their families rebuild, relearn, and recover.

## Your fundraising can:

- Support the helpline, offering expert advice when it's needed most
- Fund the Emergency Fund, helping families visit loved ones in critical care
- Provide Brain Injury ID Cards, giving survivors confidence and protection

## How can you get involved?

Really, it's easier than you think. I'm not a runner – I just wanted to challenge myself!

There are so many ways you can raise money. Here are a few ideas I've seen others try:

- Take on a physical challenge: Walk, hike, cycle, swim – or even skydive!
- Get creative: Sell homemade crafts, have a tabletop sale or organise a quiz night
- Host a social event: Bake sales, coffee mornings – everyone loves cake!
- Involve your friends: Have a gaming or streaming event, run a tombola or raffle
- Involve your workplace: Dress-down days are always popular
- Top Tip: Pick something you enjoy – it makes the experience even more rewarding.



## Can you get help with materials?

Yes! I was impressed with what Headway has from:

- Posters and flyers to promote your fundraiser
- Banners, balloons and bunting to decorate
- Sponsorship form and collection tins
- Tops – from t-shirts, running vests and cycle tops



## Need help getting started?

I was nervous about asking for donations, but the Headway team made everything simple. They gave me loads of advice and encouragement. If you're interested in fundraising, just get in touch with them – they're brilliant.

Call: 0115 924 0800

Email: [fundraising@headway.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@headway.org.uk)

## Wondering what events are already happening?

That's how I got started – I checked the Get Involved section on the website and signed up for a local run. If you want to join a group event or get some inspiration, visit: [www.headway.org.uk](http://www.headway.org.uk)

## Will you get a thank you?

Absolutely! I remember the email I got after my run – it wasn't just a standard thank you. It explained how the money I raised helped, knowing the impact I'd made meant the world to me.

## Does your fundraising really matter?

Yes – the money raised by supporters like us helps people get their lives back after brain injury.

So, if you're thinking about it – go for it. You don't need to run a marathon (though you can if you want to!). Just find something you enjoy, ask for support, and know that your effort counts.

Join Team Headway today – you'll make memories, meet amazing people, and most importantly, change lives.



# Creative Expression

## A Creative Transformation (for Headway)

When Lorna Collins experienced a traumatic brain injury, she awoke with total amnesia, which left her identity in tatters. She did not know who the 'Lorna' that everyone else knew was. The only way she could express the trauma she had undergone was by making art. Art allowed Lorna to say what words could not.

"The brain injury has shaped my life in both challenging and positive ways," says Lorna. "I now lead a research project called 'A Creative Transformation' (ACT), which is directed by and for people with lived experience of brain injury.

"In the first phase of the project ('ACT 1'), we ran art workshops, discussion events and NHS training around the theme of brain injury and trauma, expressed through art and creativity. We are currently initiating the next phase, ACT 2. This involves running a series of creative art groups for inpatients at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery; holding a writing

for wellbeing workshop for young people and young carers of people with brain injury in Manchester; organising an interactive event to showcase AI smartphone technology with participants who have psychosis following brain injury in Birmingham; and working with clients at Headway Surrey, where we are making 3 films called 'User Guides to Acquired Brain Injury'.

These films tell stories of recovery, from the inside.

Brain injury survivor and ACT project partner from Headway Surrey, Beth Lowe, called the project an opportunity to 'turn her experiences into something positive' and to 'give back' to the service which has supported her on her journey.

Beth said: "It's amazing to be able to connect with the clients at Headway Surrey, to share experiences and realise that I am not alone in my journey with recovery after my traumatic brain injury."

*"I'm so excited to see how the project is taking shape and cannot wait to see the films in finished form. It's an absolute privilege to be a partner in this project, to be able to give something back to Headway Surrey and to be a part of the absolutely amazing ACT community."*

A Creative Transformation ACT 2 engages with the arts and creativity to express and visualise the effects of a brain injury, as something very personal, which is so often stigmatised and misunderstood.



Lorna added: "The project is shaped by my own and other project partners' lived experiences. We offer creative interventions for fellow brain injury survivors, supporting participants to make art, tell their stories and challenge norms.

*"My brain injury has often led me to feel stranded in an isolated vacuum of not-knowing. Making art with other survivors in the project allows us to map out a constellation of our experiences. We build our creative community of practice and recovery by making high quality art in different media, as testimony to identity and recovery: living well, with or after brain injury."*

A Creative Transformation is funded by Arts Council England: <https://acreativetransformation.org>







# The Approved Provider Scheme

## What is the Headway Approved Provider Scheme?

The Headway Approved Provider Scheme is an accreditation program aimed at promoting high standards of care and practice within specialist brain injury services. It ensures that services prioritise the needs of individuals and families while also receiving expert guidance and support from Headway - the brain injury association.

## Who is eligible to apply for the Headway Approved Provider Scheme?

The scheme is open to residential services specialising in the care and rehabilitation of individuals with brain injuries. This includes both established residential services and providers looking to start supporting brain injury survivors, provided they meet Headway's standards and are committed to continuous improvement in care delivery.

## What does the accreditation process involve?

The process includes an assessment conducted by a professional in the field of brain injury and an expert by experience. The assessment will review care practices, staff training, service delivery, and user experience, with recommendations, suggestions, and resources provided by Headway ABI experts.

Successful services receive an accreditation logo and certificate, which validates their commitment to high standards.

## How does the scheme help improve the quality of service?

The scheme supports services by identifying gaps and areas for improvement, offering guidance from ABI experts, and ensuring ongoing training to deliver high-quality care and prioritise the experience of both service users and their families.

## What are the benefits of becoming an Approved Provider?

Approved Providers gain access to expert recommendations, accreditation through the Headway logo and certificate, listing and promotion on the Headway website, free corporate membership, and discounted rates on Headway training courses.







# Leading Personal Injury and Medical Negligence Lawyers



Boyes Turner is proud to be an active supporter of Headway. Kim Milan, head of our Personal Injury team, is a Trustee of Headway Thames Valley.

Our specialist lawyers and brain injury support team have the knowledge, experience and commitment to ensure that you and your loved ones get the result you deserve and the support you need. We are more than happy to visit you in hospital or at home at times that suit you. We provide national coverage.

A special thank you to my lawyer Kim. Her input has changed everything for me. She has given my life a level of security and stability that I never thought I was capable of achieving post-accident.

Jessica Stevens

Contact Kim Milan on **0118 952 7137** or [claimsadvice@boyesturner.com](mailto:claimsadvice@boyesturner.com)  
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# FREETHS

# Putting your life back on track

## It's what we do



Prince Evans LLP is a specialist brain injury practice that focuses upon representing the interests of our clients and their families to the full.

We are understanding and knowledgeable of the multiple complexities that are experienced by all when a loved one is affected by brain injury.

We provide a free nationwide no obligation consultation to discuss respective claims and where our expertise can assist; including with potential interim payments, rehabilitation and case management and support. We offer no win, no fee funding.



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

**Call free on 0800 019 0991**

Email: [gary.smith@prince-evans.co.uk](mailto:gary.smith@prince-evans.co.uk)

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



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