

BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

INFORMATION ON BRAIN INJURY



WHAT IS BRAIN INJURY?

Each year, as many as 1 million people attend Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments in the United Kingdom following a head injury.

The brain is an amazing organ that determines what we think, do and who we are. Although protected by the skull, the brain can still be easily injured, even if there is no obvious external damage to the head.

It is estimated that approximately 2000 people a year in Northern Ireland sustain and are living with the long-term effects of a brain injury.

There are two types of brain injury:

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY (ABI)

Refers to any form of brain injury that has occurred since birth. ABI can occur without any outward physical evidence of injury or trauma. This includes damage to the brain caused by:

- Strokes
- Tumours
- Anoxia
- Hypoxia
- Infection
- Meningitis
- Encephalitis
- Other conditions not necessarily caused by an external force

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

Refers to when damage is caused to brain tissue caused by an external force. Leading causes of TBI are:

- Motor vehicle accidents
- Acts of violence
- Falls
- Sports and recreational injuries
- Blows to the head

HOW DOES A BRAIN INJURY AFFECT A PERSON?

Brain injury affects each person differently. Some people may have varying degrees of physical disability, as well as the less visually obvious problems such as:

- Memory loss
- Lack of concentration
- Problems with balance
- Speech difficulties
- Personality or behaviour deficits
- Difficulties with organisational and coping skills

These problems can have a life-changing effect on the person with the brain injury and on their families. It will impact on how family members relate to each other, their financial situation, their social network and much more. Parenting skills may be affected and family roles may change. This can be very stressful and demanding and the importance of supporting the whole family must be recognised.

SUPPORT

For information on brain injury or for further support please contact your local Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT), they can direct you to the relevant brain injury services.

There are a number of voluntary and community organisations providing support to individuals living with a brain injury and their carers. They can offer information, advice and support focussed around the interests of the individual and the carer.



(Map of Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland)



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