

Every year thousands of people across Scotland have their lives and their family's lives affected by Acquired Brain Injury. In my own case nearly eleven years ago, my family found that there was no after care available after my release from hospital from the NHS. The only help we received was from voluntary organisations. Today little has changed.

However with the setup of ABI National Managed Clinical Network (NMCN) which is two years old is a small step forward.

ABI National Managed Clinical Network has made good progress in mapping ABI services provision across Scotland.

It has succeeded in identifying various gaps and has produced standards from a health perspective on the care of people with ABI. However, it still has to tackle the care of people with ABI in the community and this is the next phase of its work. It is hoped from this work, standards will be produced that set down what people with ABI living in the community can expect in terms of support. The worry is though what if the standards are not adhered to? Who can people complain to when there is no support?

Accountability for ensuring standards are implemented and adhered to be very worrying for everyone. It's all very well for the Scottish Government to fund the production of standards but what I would like to know is what the follow is up?

The other big issue facing people with ABI (not just in Grampian) but across Scotland is how to access funding needed to support people in the community and money that they are entitled to. I read that £435 million pounds has been made available over three years under "Fairer Scotland Fund" to overcome barriers, support vulnerable groups and improve communities etc. However how to access such funding is sometimes impossible for small local voluntary organisations to manage.

They don't have the resources to send people to join groups to have their voices heard. They find it difficult to know which group is the best one to join - should it be the Community Planning Partnership. Or the Joint Improvement Team? for those involved in reviewing services or what the state of play is between their local concordat between local authorities and government. Often they felt abandoned before all of these initiatives and sadly they might still feel abandoned when it's all over especially if they don't benefit because the funds can't be accessed. These people are too busy and consumed with trying to make a difference to the lives of people with brain injury in a practical way to get involved in the politics of finding out the right funding stream for their group. Their voices are seldom heard – this situation needs to be addressed – urgently!!

Various voluntary organisations, e.g. Headway, Momentum, Brainhelp, across Scotland transform people's lives by bringing people of a shared similar experience together by getting them actively involved in the community, by

galvanising them to campaign and raise awareness about brain injury and by most importantly of all helping them to establish social networks and friendships – it's what we all want and people with brain injury are no different.

In conclusion I would urge the Scottish Government to identify "ABI" in terms of being a separate category for service planning, funding and delivery as this would simplify and improve the pathway of care, service and service delivery for this group. Brainhelp therefore supports the main proposal in this petition for ABI to become a recognised separate condition by the statutory bodies in Scotland.

Regards

Walter Baxter MFA. Chairman Brainhelp