



the brain injury association

Headway Volunteer Led Branch Volunteer Handbook





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Welcome to Headway

Welcome to Headway - the brain injury association, and thank you for volunteering your time to support your local branch. Our volunteers are vital to the charity and allow us to support more people affected by brain injury.

Our local branches are run entirely by volunteers and these branches play a crucial role in supporting brain injury survivors, their families and carers in their local communities.

We know that we couldn't provide the support brain injury survivors need without your help. This is why we will make sure we do everything we can to make your time as a volunteer as enjoyable and worthwhile as possible.

The aim of this handbook is to give you information about the charity, our services and volunteering roles, so that you feel confident, supported and prepared to volunteer.

Thank you very much for applying and taking the time to train and volunteer. We are very excited to have you as part of the charity.

Luke Griggs

Chief Executive
Headway UK



If you have any questions about anything mentioned in this handbook, then please ask your Regional Network Support Coordinator.



Headway – The Brain Injury Association

About Us

Headway UK was set up by relatives of people with acquired and traumatic brain injuries, and professionals working within the brain injury field, to offer support and self-help to those whose lives have been affected by brain injury; individuals who have sustained a head injury, family members, carers and other associated professionals.

Our Mission

To promote understanding of all aspects of brain injury and provide information, support and services to survivors, their families and carers. In addition, Headway will campaign to reduce the incidence of brain injury.

Our Services

Headway is the UK-wide charity that works to improve life after brain injury by providing vital support and information services including:

- a freephone helpline (0808 800 2244, helpline@headway.org.uk);
- a comprehensive award-winning website containing information and factsheets on all aspects of brain injury (www.headway.org.uk);
- an award-winning range of booklets and publications designed to help people understand and cope with the effects of brain injury;
- an Emergency Fund to assist people dealing with the financial implications in the immediate aftermath of a brain injury;
- a Brain Injury Identity Card to help in everyday situations and if you come into contact with the criminal justice system;
- a directory of approved residential homes, rehabilitation units and respite facilities specialising in ABI.

Headway has a network of over 120 local Headway charities and volunteer led branches throughout the UK and Channel Islands which provide a wide range of services to survivors and families in their own communities.



What is a Brain Injury?

An acquired brain injury (ABI) is any brain injury that has occurred since birth. One form of ABI is traumatic brain injury (TBI), which is caused by a severe blow to the head, for example in a road traffic collision, fall or assault. Other types of ABI include strokes, infections (such as encephalitis and meningitis), tumours, hydrocephalus, hypoxia (oxygen deprivation), carbon monoxide poisoning and cerebral abscesses.



The Effects of Brain Injury

The brain is remarkably complex and controls everything we do. This means that brain injury can have a huge variety of effects, depending on the severity of the injury and the area of the brain affected. Due to this complexity, it can be impossible to predict the level of recovery that can be expected or the specific difficulties that will be experienced. The full effects of the injury usually only become apparent when the person returns home.

Emotional and behavioural effects:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Apathy and loss of motivation
- Depression
- Disinhibition
- Egocentricity
- Impaired insight and empathy
- Impulsivity and self-control problems
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Personality changes
- Restlessness

Physical effects:

- Dizziness or balance problems
- Epileptic seizures or absences
- Fatigue, often severe
- Hormonal imbalances
- Loss of taste and smell
- Movement and co-ordination problems
- Neuropathic pain
- Sensitivity to light / sound
- Sexual dysfunction
- Sleep disturbance
- Speech difficulties
- Tinnitus
- Weakness or paralysis

Cognitive effects:

- Attention and concentration problems
- Acquired dyslexia
- Decision-making problems
- Information processing difficulties
- Communication problems
- Memory problems
- Object recognition problems (agnosia)
- Problem-solving difficulties
- Perception problems
- Planning and organisation problems

Note: There are many more possible effects. Please visit www.headway.org.uk for more information and video clips.



Volunteering with Headway

Volunteers are vital to the work of Headway volunteer led branches. There are many ways in which you can help us with your time and effort. It could be a few hours a week giving administrative help, time spent on a telephone information line, helping with activities for those with a brain injury or organising outings and events. Help may be needed with activities such as art and crafts, hobbies, and computer skills. You may also give your time as a committee member, attending committee meetings and working with others to achieve the aims and objectives of the branch. Every single voluntary role is important, and we want to ensure you feel supported, confident and happy in your role.

How we support our volunteers

To provide you with the very best volunteering experience, we offer a range of support, training and development. You will have access to:

- A thorough induction for the role
- A named contact within the branch
- A programme of online training for volunteers
- Support from your regional Network Support Co-ordinator



What you can expect from us

Our volunteers are an incredibly important part of our organisation and we could not support brain injury survivors without your time, effort and skills. We will do everything we can to ensure you have a positive experience.

We will:

- Provide appropriate information, basic training, and assistance so that you can meet the responsibilities of your volunteering role
- Provide you with regular support and a named contact who will support you in your role
- Respect your skills, dignity, and specific needs, and to do our best to adjust to your individual requirements
- Treat you as an equal, jointly responsible for the welfare of our members and fulfilment of our mission
- Provide adequate insurance cover for you whilst volunteering
- Resolve fairly, any problems, grievances, or difficulties you may have while volunteering for us.

What we expect from you

As a volunteer, you are the face of Headway to all the people we support. We expect all of our staff and volunteers uphold our values in their work and feel proud to be representing the charity.

Volunteers should be able to demonstrate that they:

- Are good listeners.
- Have the ability to develop and maintain supportive relationships with people affected by brain injury.
- Respect different lifestyles and ways of managing difficulties.
- Are willing to learn about brain injury and its effects on those with the injury and their families and carers.
- Understand the need for confidentiality and liaison with Headway committee members.
- Are willing to increase their knowledge and skills by attending training.
- Are willing to commit to an agreed amount of time each month.
- Are willing to work towards the aims of the branch and follow the volunteer code of conduct.



Important Things to Remember as a Volunteer

While there are lots of different roles and activities you can take part in as a volunteer with Headway, there are some important things which always remain the same.

Boundaries

Volunteering at a Headway branch is first and foremost about working with people; however, the relationship between you and the people you support is a more “formal” relationship, so whilst you will be friendly, warm and build up a rapport with members it is different from personal relationships. A volunteer engages in a supportive relationship that focuses on the needs of the Headway member. Moving the focus of care away from meeting Headway members’ needs towards meeting the volunteer’s own needs is unacceptable.

Working in partnership

It is important to do things with people, not for them or to them. There are lots of different agencies and people that we work with when supporting someone. The people we support may sometimes also use other agencies, such as health and social care. If you do not know about these services, then this may be something you want to discuss with your Headway branch contact.

Active Listening

As a volunteer, one of the most important parts of your role is listening to the people who benefit from Headway’s services. Being truly listened to and allowed to talk about your experience in your own words, without being rushed or interrupted can be an incredibly powerful experience. Everyone’s experience of brain injury is different, and it is only by listening and hearing their own description that we can really understand how life is like for them.

Volunteers must be aware of the difference between being a counsellor and using counselling skills (such as active listening with a non-judgmental approach) that are appropriate for the delivery of care and support. Counselling is not an appropriate role for volunteers and members should be given advice and support to access other appropriate agencies where necessary.

Language

Language is a very personal thing. The words that one person feels comfortable with, might be offensive or have a different meaning to someone else. Be careful when using words like “disabled” or “survivor” for example. Although these expressions may be familiar to you, they may feel uncomfortable for others. A good guide can be to listen to the language the person uses and adopt that in your conversations with them.

Independence

Headway’s role is about supporting people to stay as independent as possible. It is a matter of working alongside them, not taking over. It is about doing things with people, rather than for or to them. For some, this means a gentle prompting; perhaps helping them learn or re-learn how to do things. For others, you will need to do more things, for example, because of their health. For everyone, it means doing as much as possible to help people help themselves and stay in control of their own lives.

The challenge for us is that any time a person you support has to settle for less independence than they had before we identify the reasons why and look for ways to support them to achieve their full potential.

We aim to promote independence and an important part of this must be the recognition that the people we support have the same rights as citizens as anyone else.



Gifts

It is a strict policy that no volunteer or committee member will accept gifts or money from members or service users, or any bequests in their wills. You should notify your Headway branch contact, the chair of the committee, or the Headway UK network support coordinator, if any such gift or bequest is offered. You must not provide help or advice on the preparation of wills, deeds of gifts, or any other document created to pass property, or provide any other type of favour.

Insurance

Headway has public liability insurance cover which protects volunteers when carrying out the charity's business. You will be required to have business insurance cover for your car if transporting any Headway members, in conjunction with a risk assessment (which will be provided by the branch). Most insurance companies do not add an additional charge for this cover, which includes carrying passengers in connection with volunteering. However, it is important to check that any passengers are insured with your insurer. The chair / supervisor or secretary will need to see a copy of your insurance. Your Headway branch cannot be responsible for loss or damage to your personal possessions.

Social Media

Social media is a useful tool in raising awareness of Headway and with engaging with people who may benefit from our services. If you are using your social media platform to promote the work of Headway and are referencing your role as a volunteer, please make sure that your language and content is appropriate.



Volunteer Case Studies

Headway Tamworth and Lichfield



Dawn is secretary of the Headway Tamworth and Lichfield branch and has been leading the group for over 16 years. She worked as a neurological Occupational Therapist and in 2007 after finding that there was no support available for survivors of brain injury in South Staffordshire, she set up the Headway branch. Dawn helps to run monthly group meetings in Tamworth, with workshops on brain injury topics, guest speakers and art classes.

Dawn says, “At each meeting there is a core of around 15 members, but this can go up to about 30. I meet with new survivors of brain injury who are not sure what happens next. I help them and their families to navigate services, fill in forms and explain where possible the effects of brain injury such as fatigue, memory problems, executive dysfunction. Some people never come to the group, but keep in-touch with me when they need to. Sometimes they just need to know there is someone there.”

“I do talks to various local groups and organisations to raise awareness of brain injury. I usually start with a small quiz and have up to date fantastic facts! Before lockdown the Mayor of Tamworth selected the group as one of his charities for the year, this was amazing. At the Mayor’s ball I put leaflets on all the tables and the Mayor talked about the group. He had not known about the group when his wife had a brain tumour. He keeps in-touch now. I have referrals from various hospitals and therapy teams for survivors, who live in the area.”

Dawn runs the branch alongside other volunteers – a chairperson, a treasurer and carer support volunteers who can offer support to the carers who attend the meetings as they have experience of caring for family members with a brain injury.

“The group is amazing, I always say they are the experts - I have not had a brain injury but can help with explaining why they feel like they do or how to continue their recovery.”

Headway Meirionnydd



Pat is chair of Headway Meirionnydd in Wales. She comes from a family of volunteers so started at an early age.

“Both my Nan and Aunty were in the WRVS and received BEM and MBE for their long service. I used to help during school holidays in the running of WRVS canteen in Walton Hospital. Strangely enough my Nan was one of the people who was on the Fazakerley Hospital League of Friends and helped raised money for the Neurological Centre there. Who would have known all those years later, that I would help, along with an amazing team of volunteers to run the Headway branch here in Llwyngwril.

I had not heard of Headway until my husband’s stroke back in 2009 and we were referred to The Brain Injury Service in Colwyn Bay. It was here where it all began.

Due to giving up work to become my husband’s full-time carer I needed something away from my own caring duties. So, I have been the chair of Headway since 2015 and we were known as Headway South Gwynedd, a subunit of Headway Gwynedd and Mon. in 2023 we decided to become a separate new Headway branch – Headway Meirionnydd. This has become possible due to the fact I have so many wonderful people to help me in the running of Headway Meirionnydd.

We have lots of different themes to our meetings some of which we open up to the public in sharing our meeting, such as presentations, quiz nights and other fund-raising sessions.

We also love our trips out in the summer and our Christmas Lunch which is always a very jolly occasion with a young gentleman who is a relative of one of our members always bringing a tear to our eyes with his amazing voice over the past 8 years.

I was also very humbled to give a ‘carers view’ of dealing with a Brain Injury survivor presentation at last year’s Headway Cymru virtual conference. I now also am a member of the conference planning team for Headway Cymru’s annual conference.”

Headway Berwick



For the past five years, Ronnie has been playing at Headway Berwick's music sessions once a month and is also part of local music duo Kingfisher with Nicola.

In 2022, Ronnie and one of Berwick's members Jim wrote a song about life with a brain injury, "The Penny Drops".

Headway Berwick member Jim was reflecting on the daily challenges of being a brain injury survivor, when he had a sudden moment of inspiration. "I was sitting thinking of how I come across as slow sometimes with jokes or any information, as it takes a bit longer to process than is expected," said Jim.

Jim felt compelled to write these thoughts down on paper and share them with Northumberland singer-songwriter and friend, Ronnie. Jim's message to Ronnie expressing his thoughts, set the wheels in motion for what would later become the song 'The Penny Drops.' The lyrics express how Jim feels life has changed since acquiring his brain injury, but also serve as a reminder to others that despite the changes, he's still Jim.

Moved by what Jim had shared with him, Ronnie got to work turning Jim's powerful words into a song. "I looked at these words and thought, 'wow, this is amazing,' and by the end of the day, I had written the tune," said Ronnie. "The following day, I picked up Jim on one of our many wildlife photography outings - he is also an amazing photographer - and played him the song, which brought tears to his eyes." In the following weeks, Ronnie set about fine-tuning the song with his good friend Nicola, who he performs with as Kingfisher. The song is available to download, with all royalties going to Headway.

The song was played in the busy town square, when a group of volunteers from Headway Berwick were given permission to busk in the centre of the town on a busy Easter weekend. A number of volunteers sang and played music, some volunteers handed out Headway literature about brain injury to the public and others had buckets to collect money. In total they collected £272.30 for their branch and raised awareness of brain injury and the support Headway offers.



Important Policies

There are a number of important policies and documents that you need to be aware of as a volunteer with Headway.

You can find the following policies online at www.headway.org.uk/headway-branch-volunteer-policies/ :

- Safeguarding policy
- Equality, diversity and inclusion policy
- Health and safety policy
- Data protection policy
- Volunteering policy
- Complaints policy and procedure
- Whistleblowing policy
- Smoking, drugs and alcohol policy
- Hospitality and anti-bribery policy
- Branch volunteer expenses policy
- Confidentiality policy for branch volunteers

You will also be provided with a copy of your branch's constitution.

Volunteer Agreement

We ask every volunteer to read and sign our volunteer agreement, which outlines our commitments to you and our expectations of your volunteer role.



Safeguarding

Headway is committed to creating and maintaining a positive environment and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all adults it supports and who are involved in its services, projects and activities. This includes service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and employees.

References

All volunteers for Headway branches are required to have 2 satisfactory references as part of our safer recruitment process. Please ask your branch contact if you have any questions about this.

Safeguarding Training

Headway UK offer online safeguarding training for all branch volunteers which can be renewed every two years. Whilst this is not compulsory we would encourage you to take part and keep up to date with best practice.

All volunteers are expected to read the safeguarding policy and understand their responsibilities relating to safeguarding.

Safeguarding Disclosures

Disclosures are rare, but if a service user discloses that they are being abused or their wellbeing is at risk there are some key things you should remember:

- Stay calm. Let them talk, use open questions and stay non-judgemental.
- Ask the service user what they would like to happen next, but also inform them that you must pass information on if they are in danger.
- Write down details of the disclosure as soon as possible, including when, where, how and what was said or done. You should avoid using jargon, just stick to the facts.
- Pass the information immediately to your supervisor at Headway and they will take it from there. The lead safeguarding officer will contact and inform the relevant agencies if necessary.



Volunteer Induction Checklist

Before you begin as a volunteer with us, you will need to have:

- Two references
- Read the policies and procedures
- Signed and returned the volunteer agreement
- Signed and returned a solicitors or professional code of conduct (where applicable)

You will be given a named contact at your local volunteer led Headway branch. They will support you to become ready to volunteer. If you have any further questions you can contact your Network Support Coordinator.



Ongoing Support and Development

Your branch will make you aware of the training and development opportunities available through Headway. We would encourage you to use these to learn more about brain injury and the people you are supporting. We welcome ideas for additional training, please share these with your Network Support Coordinator.

After 6 months, you will be invited to discuss your volunteer role with your branch contact, to ensure the role is working well for you and the branch. If you wish to discuss your role or have questions at any time please contact your branch.

Thank you for your time and effort during the recruitment and induction process. We are excited to have you as a volunteer with Headway!

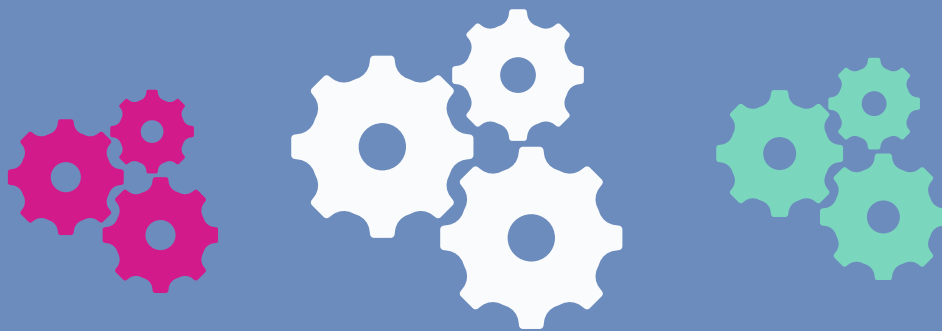




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