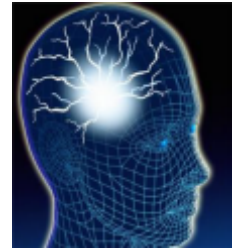




*moving forward together...*

# HEADWAY *Luton*

*... supporting people with an acquired brain injury*



This leaflet has been produced in partnership with  
Adult Social Care Services - Luton Borough Council

Registered Charity No. 1080775

## *Acquired*

## *Brain Injury - Causes & Consequences*

### *What is an Acquired Brain Injury?*

Headway Luton simply defines an acquired brain injury (ABI) as any damage to the brain, which is non-degenerative, that has happened since birth, and is due to internal or external causes

#### *How many people have an ABI?*

Each year in the UK 1.4 million people attend hospital with a head injury of some kind. Of these approximately 100,000 will be diagnosed as having an ABI, of which up to 90% will range from mild to moderate injuries. This means at least 10,000 people per year suffer a severe ABI causing possible life changing difficulties

#### *Who could it affect?*

It can happen, without warning, to anyone at any time regardless of the persons' age, gender, race, religion, culture or social-economic background

#### *Can it be prevented?*

Many of the internal causes cannot be prevented but many ABI that are caused by external forces are accidental and may have been avoided. Headway Luton aims to raise awareness of ABI throughout the community and help reduce these incidents

#### *Can the brain recover by itself?*

This depends on the severity and location of the injury, and the individual. A mild ABI may take just months to recover whereas moderate or severe ABI may cause life long physical and/or cognitive disabilities

**Headway Luton are here to help!**

# ***A.B.I. - Internal Causes***

Internal causes are medical conditions or surgical incidents that can lead to an ABI. This list is not exhaustive but the most common are as follows:

***Alcohol abuse*** – excessive drinking over a short or prolonged period

***Anaesthetic accident*** – misuse of anaesthesia during surgery

***Anoxia*** – loss of oxygen supply to brain cells

***Aneurysm*** – weakened brain artery wall possibly leading to a haemorrhage

***Embolism*** – blockage of an artery e.g. a clot

***Encephalitis*** – Inflammation of brain due to infection

***Epilepsy*** – abnormal electrical activity in brain

***Drug abuse*** – overdose or combination of prescribed or non-prescribed drugs

***Haematoma*** – blood clot in the brain possibly leading to a stroke

***Haemorrhage*** – bleeding in the brain

***Hydrocephalus*** – build up of fluid in the brain

***Hypoxia*** – reduced oxygen supply to brain cells

***Meningitis*** – infection affecting the brain protective outer membrane, the meninges

***Poisoning*** – inhaled or ingested toxic substances eg. carbon monoxide, solvents, lead

***Stroke*** – severe interruption of blood flow

***Surgery*** – damage caused by any neurosurgery

***Tumour*** – abnormal growth causing pressure on the brain

# ABI – External Causes

External causes are traumatic injuries to the brain caused by violent movement of the head, direct impact or penetration of the head. The most common incidents are as follows:

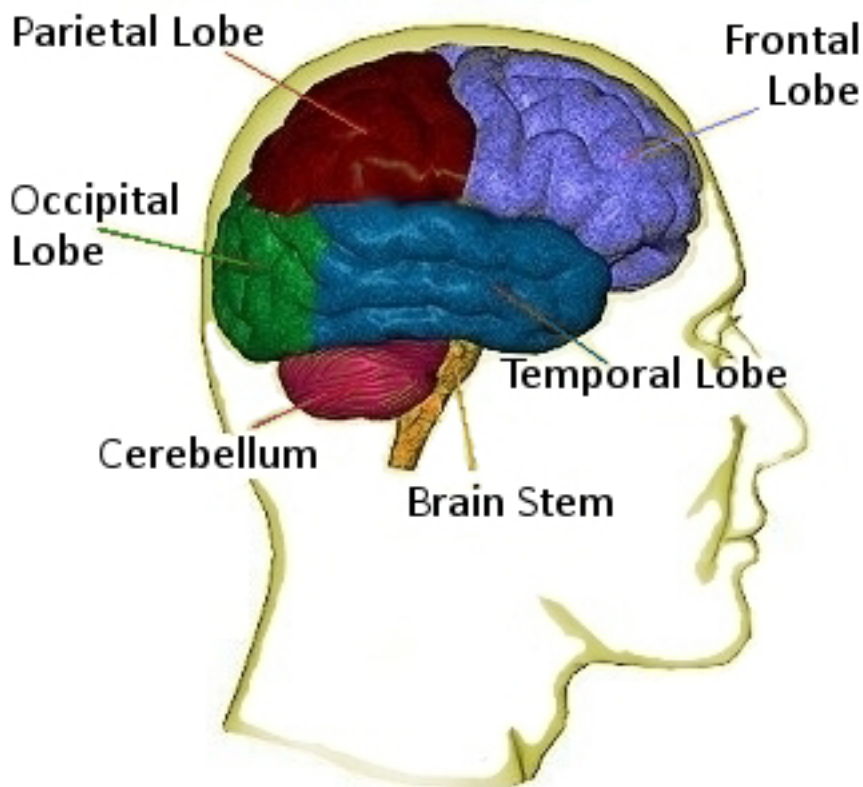
*Road traffic accidents*

*Street and domestic violence*

*Military conflict*

*Accidents at work or at home, including falls*

*Sport and leisure pursuits*



Traumatic injuries are often followed, some time after, by secondary ABI caused by internal bleeding, swelling or bruising of the brain

Different areas of the brain have separate main functions and any localised ABI will probably have some effect on its functions, such as:

***Cerebellum*** – balance, muscle co-ordination

***Occipital Lobe*** – vision

***Parietal Lobe*** – sensations, spatial awareness

***Temporal Lobe*** – memory, hearing, taste/smell

***Frontal Lobe*** – behaviour, emotion, personality Also executive functions e.g. problem solving, planning, multi tasking, organising, initiating

# *Consequences of A.B.I.*

Many people with a mild ABI will hopefully recover over a few months, whereas those with a moderate to severe ABI may well have long term neurological conditions causing physical and/or cognitive difficulties. These could often be for life and have life changing consequences

Due to the complexity of the brain and the nature of the injury each individual will demonstrate a unique set of problems, possibly including any one or more of the following:

## *Physical Consequences:*

Physical disabilities including mobility problems; loss of sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch; balance problems, fatigue, partial paralysis, epilepsy, incontinence problems

## *Cognitive Consequences:*

Poor memory, attention, concentration, judgement, perception; lack of insight, speech and language difficulties, information processing, spatial awareness problems

## *Emotional/Behavioural Consequences:*

Poor communication/social skills, personality changes, inappropriate behaviour, emotional issues, mood swings, anxiety, depression, anger, lack of motivation, apathy, concrete thinking, impulsiveness, compulsiveness

These problems often cause decreased self-value and ambition, unemployment, personal crisis, breakdown of relationships and loss of friends leading to increased social exclusion, financial problems and a high dependency on care and other support services

# *For further information/contact:*

## ***Headway Luton Ltd***

An independent voluntary organisation and a company limited by guarantee

Governed by a membership elected Board of Trustees and staffed by experienced, qualified personnel and trained volunteers

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Affiliated to Headway UK, the brain injury association

Group originally formed as Headway South Beds & District in 1989

Supported by Adult Social Care Services, Luton Borough Council and NHS Luton

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### *Headway UK Helpline*

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