

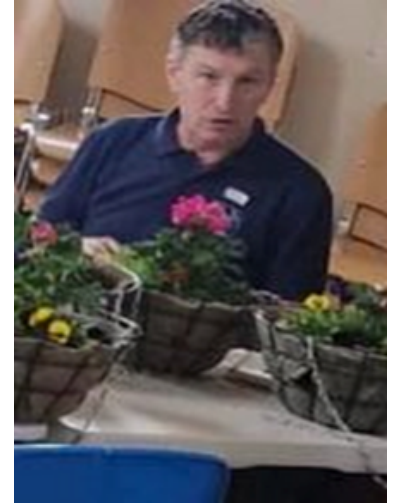
Headway Sefton News

May 2023



Welcome to our May monthly drop in

Hello to all of our members and welcome to this month's newsletter. We had a great time last month making our hanging baskets – we hope they are blooming.



ACTION FOR BRAIN INJURY WEEK 2023

15-21 MAY

This month marks Action for Brain Injury Week

#Every90Seconds

What a frightening statistic that every 90 seconds someone in the UK is admitted to hospital with a brain injury. When people hear the term "brain injury" they often think of the type of injury suffered in a car crash or an assault, yet the term is much more far reaching. Brain tumours, Infections, strokes and heart attacks are can also cause injury to the brain.

Action for Brain Injury Week runs every year to raise awareness and understanding of brain injury and by doing so helps to improve the lives of those who have survived an injury, their carers and family members as they learn to live with the imposed changes.



Most common causes of traumatic brain injury

Falls, road traffic collisions and assaults are the most common causes of traumatic brain injury (TBI). Each year, around 150,000 people are admitted to hospital with a head injury that can result in a TBI, which can have devastating and lifelong consequences.

www.headway.org.uk

**ACTION FOR
BRAIN INJURY WEEK 2023**
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**EVERY
90
SECONDS**

Carol Hopwood is head of our Serious Injury Team at Carpenters Group. We asked Carol about her experience and why raising awareness is so important.

"My first experience of someone with a brain injury was my grandad. He suffered multiple strokes which left him with both physical and neurological issues. I was a youngster at the time and all I could see was someone no longer able to run around with us, who slept a lot and who spoke like he was drunk. It was all a bit frightening, and I didn't really know what to say or do. No one in the family had any experience of brain injury and looking back now I realise that he got little support or rehabilitation and he just had to get on with it. Thankfully things have massively improved. We know more about the complex workings of the brain and how important good quality care and rehabilitation can improve long term outcomes.

We will be having a visit from Jackson Lees on 29th June.



Danielle is a Court of Protection specialist at Jackson Lees Solicitors and is available to speak to anyone who has any questions about deputyships for any loved ones who have lost the capacity to manage their financial affairs due to injury or illness

Barry is a qualified solicitor at Jackson Lees Solicitors who takes pride in being able to help clients by giving them straightforward, jargon free and practical advice. He specialises in Wills, Trusts and Estates. He deals with a broad range of legal matters including drafting wills and powers of attorney, succession planning, estate administration, trust creation and trust administration and he will be talking to our members about his knowledge.





the spotlight

Our members story - Rachel and Phil Akehurst

Phil's Complex Cranioplasty

Hello Headway friends! We're really proud to be sharing one aspect of Phil's recovery with you...his cranio reconstruction following his TBI.

"On 23rd December 2020, Phil was enjoying a Christmas night out with work colleagues. He was crossing the road and was hit head on by a pizza delivery driver. The driver did not see Phil until moments before he struck him. The driver got out to assist and the police reports stated that Phil was immediately unconscious, his eyes rolled back, with blood coming from his ears.

He was taken by ambulance to our local A&E (Whiston). However, they refused him access as his injuries were too severe. He was taken to Aintree A&E and the team spent 3 hours stabilizing him before I was able to see him. When the doctor came to speak to me, all I heard was "massive brain haemorrhage" "multiple areas of damage to the brain" and "unlikely to survive" before I ran off to be sick and my legs gave way.

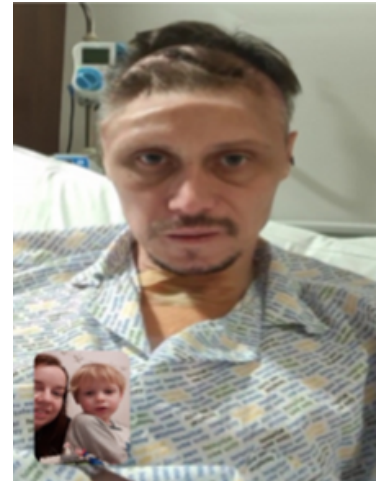
When I finally got to see Phil that night, he looked absolutely perfect: No scratches, no cuts, no grazes. It was very surreal. I spent ten minutes with him, stroking his skin and talking to him, begging him to wake up, before I was told I needed to leave (covid restrictions at that time were in place). Phil was transferred to Walton Neurological Centre.

I arrived home at 3am. It was now Christmas Eve. Our 4 year old son Sam was fast asleep in bed completely unaware. My parents had stayed with him whilst I was at the hospital. Sam woke at 4am for a cuddle, and I somehow managed to get him back to sleep without him knowing what was going on elsewhere. I remember thinking to myself at this point "I can do this. I have to. For Sam". He woke properly for the day at 7am and I told him about the accident. I will NEVER forget those big blue sleepy eyes looking at me in disbelief as his little mind tried to make sense of my words.

Phil continued to deteriorate over the next few days.

Four days after the accident, Phil had a bi-frontal decompressive craniotomy. His brain pressure was becoming so high because his brain had swollen so much, that now his skull was causing more damage to his brain. So, he had to have his entire frontal skull removed. I was told that this was a "last resort". But this surgery turned out to be the best course of action for Phil. After the craniotomy, his brain had room to swell, and he started to stabilize. He remained in a coma for 2.5 weeks before he very slowly began to emerge.

Here's Phil about a month after the craniotomy during a video call with me and Sam (no visiting was allowed on the wards, again because of Covid).



At this stage, Phil was very agitated and confused. The pressure in his brain had gone back to normal and so his head was now "scooped" in with there being no frontal skull in place

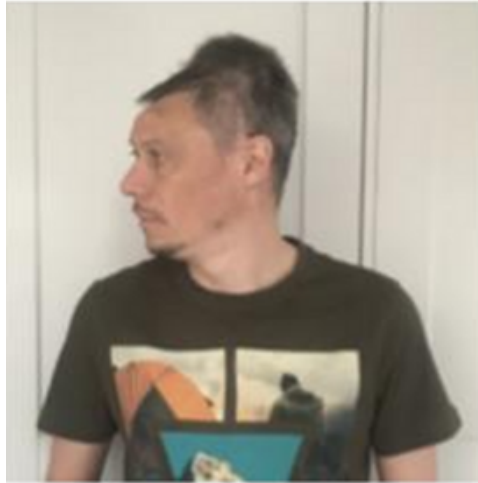


Phil needed to wear a safety helmet as his brain was very vulnerable now.

Fast forward 18 months, and we began the very long and complex process of Phil's cranio reconstruction. Because it was a large area of skull that was missing, and because his skin had shrunk, Phil needed a "complex cranioplasty" involving both plastic surgeons and neurosurgeons. It took 5 months to complete and involved two major surgeries and 17 weekly procedures.

For the first step, Phil had a balloon expander put into his scalp during March 2022. The balloon under his scalp was filled every week with fluid in order to stretch and grow the skin. After 16 weeks, he had almost 400mls of fluid in the balloon and an 8cm "growth" on top of his head. Here's some photos of what happened during that time.

Week 3



Week 17

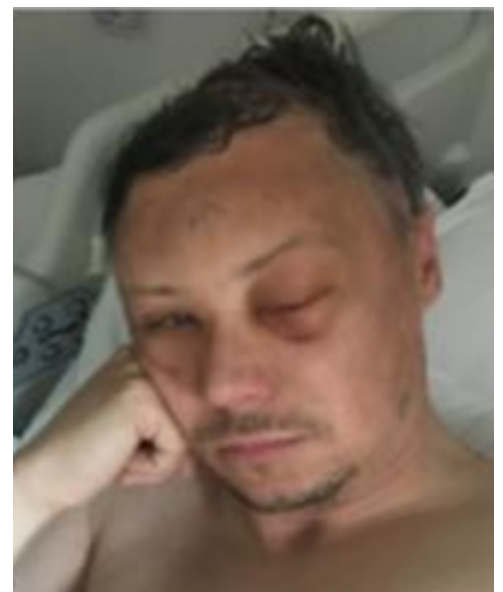


Phil's rehab was mostly put on hold during all of this. He wasn't able to wear his safety helmet as the skin was being stretched and he had more seizures than usual. Because of this, I needed to be with him 24/7. It was an incredibly tough time for us as a family, and A LOT of staring from strangers when we were out and about. We (literally) held our heads high, and we carried on as best we could. It would have been so easy for Phil to hide away at home during all of this, and I'm so proud of him for how he handled the very stressful situation with pride and determination.

In July this year, Phil had a ceramic skull put in. The surgery took 7 hours to complete, involved three fantastic surgeons, and because it was a fairly revolutionary reconstruction, he was interviewed by a camera crew and the whole thing was filmed to train other surgeons.

About two months after the surgery, I noticed quite a leap in Phil's recovery on the whole. And this has kept on coming and coming. He is more chatty, more confident, his information processing and memory have all started to improve too.

Although very very stressful, and an extra layer of trauma and worry on top of recovering from a very serious accident, Phil's surgery has made a very positive difference to his life and our life as a family.





One thing that helped was to take each stage of the surgery one step at a time, and not to look too far ahead. I love the saying "keep your head where your feet are" to help us stay focused on the present. And we apply this to Phil's recovery as a whole now – setting goals and breaking them down into small (sometimes tiny) and realistic steps and cracking on with determination.

We love you Phil so much and are so proud of how far you have come xxx"

The Cheshire & Merseyside Rehabilitation Network (CMRN)

The Cheshire & Merseyside Rehabilitation Network supports patients following traumatic injury or illness, providing specialist rehabilitation across a coordinated pathway from hyper acute to community.

Each rehabilitation service has a multidisciplinary team of medics, nurses, and therapists to support patients in their rehabilitation goals.



Rehabilitation staff to be able to meet with national, regional and local charities, hear more about their work and what information and support is available for their patients. The CMRN have invited Headway Sefton to come along to the roadshows to educate hospital and rehabilitation staff about the benefits that Headway Sefton offer in the short and long term to Brain Injury survivors

Fundraising

Easy fundraising app for your phone, ipad or PC

You can contribute to our fundraising without it costing you anything. Please if you have already signed up remember to go through Easy Fundraising before doing your on-line shopping and if you haven't yet registered with Easy Fundraising please join up! <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk>

£1 donation for each drop in - Please remember to bring £1 admission for drop-in to help towards venue and lunch costs - Thank you!

Towerwood – a gentle reminder for everyone to send their £50 deposit for Towerwood and that this trip is **strictly non-alcohol**.



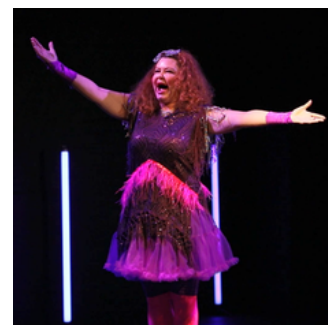
Graeae's Bespoke Artist Development programme is back! For Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists.

Are you a Deaf, disabled or neurodivergent artist that wants to be part of the changing landscape of theatre in England?

Are you a passionate artist who wants to create an in person or online performance, develop an idea, find new collaborations, but cannot get beyond barriers to developing or continuing your practice?

BEYOND is Graeae's Bespoke Artist Development programme. Starting in 2020, it has supported 48 Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists in developing their careers, taking on new challenges and building successful connections.

**We have a free Artist Development programme starting in September,
with a deadline of 26th June for applications**



For more information on this programme and how to apply visit
www.graeae.org/beyond or contact
Manishta, Artist Development Coordinator, manishta@graeae.org

9, 11 & 13 May, 21:00 CEST

EUROvision
SONG CONTEST

How amazing was the Eurovision Song Contest. Liverpool knows how to put on a party. The Eurovision village were Cha Cha Cha-ing all night with the Finland crowd favourite.

Mae Muller done us proud – Congratulations to Sweden. Did anyone go? Cath and Andrew Ormesher went and there was a section for hidden disability to enjoy the acts from a peaceful distance and around 12 seats. Brilliant they report!

Our sponsors and thanks

Big thanks to Carpenters Group (Solicitors) for their continued support of our branch in printing the newsletter. Carol can be contacted on 07866 367886.

carpenters group



**Carol Hopwood,
Head of Serious and
Catastrophic Injury**

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Have some news for us? Please email Lizzie with your news for next month's inclusion! Her email address is Elizabeth@abccms.onmicrosoft.com