

Writing an effective Headway Awards nomination form

Each year, we receive dozens of nominations from across the UK, each one recognising some very deserving people. But we can only have 12 finalists each year, so the following information provides guidance on how you can make your nomination stand out.

The Headway Annual Awards provide an opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding achievements and inspirational commitment and dedication of people living with brain injury and those working voluntarily to support them.

Awards for Achiever, Carer, or Volunteer of the Year, or the Stephen McAleese Outstanding Contribution to Headway Award provide an opportunity to publicly thank some very special people.

What should I include on my nomination form?

Try to strike a balance between giving practical details about the person's achievements or role within Headway, and heartfelt comments about what they and their achievements mean to you/others.

Don't assume people reading the nominations have any prior knowledge about the person you're nominating. Don't hold anything back!

Things to include:

Background information about the individual

If you're nominating a brain injury survivor for an award, tell us what their life was like before their injury so we can see how much of an adjustment they've had to make.

If you're nominating a volunteer or someone for the outstanding contribution award, give us some context; for example, if they volunteer five days a week despite also having other caring responsibilities that demand their attention, energy and emotion.

Or perhaps they only volunteer two days a week but that in itself is a significant achievement for some reason or other.

Remember, all nominations are evaluated and scored by a panel. Panel members may not know anything about the nominee other than what is on the nomination form so the more thorough and well written the nomination is, the better.

Longevity

Volunteers are the lifeblood of most charities – and at Headway we're particularly fortunate to have so many dedicated, generous people willing to support the charity's work.

What often marks volunteers out for special praise is the length of time someone has freely given their time to support a group or branch.

So make sure you tell us just how much work your nominee does for Headway – and for how long they've been doing it.

Detail

The more information we have, the better informed our decisions will be. So tell us as much as you can about the person, their life and the effect they have on others.

For Achiever of the Year nominees, we're looking for outstanding courage to rebuild their life after brain injury.

Achievements can be very subjective, so make sure you give as much detail as possible about how the person's brain injury has affected them. For example, returning to college might be an incredible achievement for someone who has spent ten years trying to relearn how to write.

Other achievements might be more obvious, such as completing a marathon or charity trek despite having to relearn how to walk.

For how many years has your nominee volunteered with your group or branch? How much money have they raised? How many clients were helped? Statistics can help reinforce the accomplishments of the nominee.

If you're nominating a brain injury survivor for the Achiever of the Year, remember that all achievements have to be seen in context, so try to get across just how brain injury has impacted your nominee's life.

Similarly, for carers or volunteers, make sure you give us as much detail as possible so we can get a feel for how your nominee goes above and beyond the call of duty to help others.

Be emotive!

While we're looking for details and information, we also want you to impart on us just what this person means to you and others they might support or have inspired.

For example, nominations from brain injury survivors nominating their own carers/family members for awards can be particularly moving.

So be emotive – tell us just how special this person is. Make us feel what you feel!

Don't forget to ask for help if you need it or enlist the support of others who might want to also want to contribute to the nomination – but remember to keep it a secret from the nominee!

There's a fictional example on the following page to give you an idea of a good nomination, but there's no one right way to do things – just speak from the heart!

Good luck!

Make a nomination

[Click here to nominate someone special for a Headway Award.](#)

Example

This is okay...

Samantha volunteers at our group and is always happy to help anyone who needs support. She is lovely and we think she deserves an award.

...but this is better!

Despite suffering from daily chronic pain following her own traumatic brain injury, Samantha is an invaluable volunteer for the past nine years.

In 2002, Samantha sustained a TBI in a road traffic collision. She was just 22 years old and had her entire life ahead of her. She was training to become a paediatric nurse – her dream job – and was on her way to the teaching hospital when the accident happened.

Samantha was left in a coma for a month, after which she faced three months in a rehabilitation unit where she had to relearn how to walk and talk.

She joined Headway Xxxxx in 2004. When she joined us, her confidence was incredibly low, partly as a result of speech problems. She also had difficulties with her memory, mobility and motivation.

However, she soon found a home at Headway and made good progress, so much so that she ceased being a service user and became an official volunteer in 2007. Since then, barely a day has passed when she's not been in the centre with a spring in her step and a smile on her face.

For almost a decade, she has selflessly donated her time and energy to providing vital lifeline services to others facing similar challenges.

She volunteers her time five days a week, using her own experiences of brain injury to help other members, inspiring them to keep going on their own paths to rehabilitation.

She will be the first to arrive to open up the centre and is often the last to leave.

While she will likely never be able to return to paid employment, her recovery has stunned her family and medical professionals alike. She is an inspiration to all our other members and often doesn't see the true impact her volunteering has on those around her.

Her dedication to helping others is exceptional and she never asks for anything in return.

In my 20 years of working in the charity sector, I have never come across a volunteer so deserving of recognition. Our group would simply not be able to operate without Samantha.