

Summer 2024

# Headway Matters

The magazine of Headway Birmingham & Solihull



*Client Paul Madeley enters into the spirit of Hats for Headway during ABI Week 2024!*



## VAP - so much to celebrate!



**Huge congratulations to all nine clients who recently completed our new Vocational Assistance Programme (VAP), a 50-week course designed to help those with acquired brain injury build the confidence and new skills to help them gain paid employment, volunteering experience or attain new qualifications.**

And what a success it was!

Engagement levels were high throughout, and the entire group were involved in giving a presentation about their brain injury to some children from a local primary school, a visit to Highgate Fire Station to find out more about volunteer opportunities and some specialist sessions on benefits and legal matters.

Two VAP clients completed Travel Training, giving them the skills and confidence they need to travel independently and use public transport, while a total of 29 e-Learning courses were completed – nine of them by client Usman! These included topics like Communication, Mental Health and Depression as well as more work-based training like Moving & Handling, Food Hygiene, Fire Safety and First Aid.

Client Simone used her newly-acquired presentation skills to deliver talks to a group of professionals while client Shazhad took up a voluntary role at a local food bank.

ABI Manager, Helen Bourke, who coordinated the VAP programme, said: "I am so proud of the group's achievements. They have shown commitment from the outset and made the most of the many opportunities offered to them through the VAP training. Their confidence has increased no end and will undoubtedly help them to move forward along their chosen paths."

As with any new programme, there were challenges to be faced and some learning to carry forward to future programmes, but overall, the first VAP pilot feedback was extremely positive.

*Thank you again to the National Lottery for their grant towards the programme and to Birmingham City Council for donating IT equipment specifically for VAP use.*

CEO, Sue Tyler, added: "We are now looking to introduce a new vocational training scheme, building on the success of the VAP and increasing its scope. This will include new opportunities for voluntary placements and work experience, a new ambassador scheme, an extension of our buddy programme and more focus on individual goals and projects."

*More information to follow soon!*



## Carer Friendly Workplace

We are proud to be formally recognised as a Carer Friendly Workplace and to have received the Carer Friendly Employer Commitment Mark from Forward Carers ahead of the Carer's Leaving Act coming into force.

This acknowledges our efforts to create a supportive and inclusive work environment for any of our employees who are also caring for someone at home.

Sue Tyler, our CEO, said: "Gaining our Carer Friendly Commitment Mark means a lot to Headway. As a specialist brain injury service, we focus on providing support to our families and carers, and it would be easy to overlook all the people who work for us who may also be working carers."

"This commitment has helped us focus on our staff who are juggling work and caring, and create a clear plan and procedure of how to ensure we support them. Making their colleagues aware is also really important in ensuring that working carers get the understanding they need."



Anna Smith, Executive Manager at Forward Carers,  
with Ajit Matharu, our Family & Carer Services Manager



## A chance to try new disability sports

We took a group of clients off-site in April to participate in the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace celebration event organised by the charity, Sense.

There was a whole range of accessible sports for clients to try out, from archery, tennis and cycling through to floor curling and axe throwing.

It proved a great day to socialise and have fun, and importantly, it helped raise awareness of the variety of sports available for people with disabilities and the positive role physical activity has for everyone.

*Thank you to Sense for inviting us along!*

## ACTION FOR BRAIN INJURY WEEK 2024

The focus for this year's Action for Brain Injury Week was 'a life re-written', a theme embraced by clients across all three of our centres. Some wrote poems and others made videos explaining the impact of brain injury on their individual lives and how they had moved on in a positive way.



Leighton House client, Phil Leech, for example, told us how he used to work in mechanics and while he can no longer do that, he now spends his time recycling furniture which he enjoys and feels he is doing his bit to help the environment.

Clients all enjoyed the activities organised by staff during ABI Week – such as Bhangra dancing (*left*), a mock trial, a games afternoon and more besides.

Our Family and Carer Services team also went out into the community during the week to raise greater awareness of brain injury and the support Headway can offer. This included visits to Moseley Hall Hospital to reach out to those attending Moor Green Outpatient Brain Injury Services, and to Hampstead Pavilion where they set up an information stand and chatted with a group of ladies from the local Asian community about brain injury.



## Tribunal Success

Many of our clients depend on Personal Independence Payments (commonly abbreviated to PIP), a welfare benefit intended to help adults living with a health condition or disability. The payment is based upon the practical effects of the condition or disability on a person's life, rather than the condition itself.

The application process for this can be complex and a significant number of our brain-injured clients have found their PIP payment reduced or cancelled completely when they re-apply, causing major anxiety for them and their families.

Thankfully, Chris Francis, our Fast Track Worker, has become somewhat of a specialist in this field over recent years, and has helped a large number of clients to appeal their PIP decisions.

In fact, between April 23 and March 24, Chris represented brain injured people at EIGHT PIP tribunals and won ALL of them!

Chris's latest 'big win' was in February when he went to court to appeal the case of Hamza Naveed, pictured right with his mother, Asma.

Hamza, who has a brain injury, wanted to go to college and the assessors determined that if he was capable of going to college, then he would not need PIP and so withdrew it.

After meeting up with Hamza and his family, Chris lodged an appeal and made sure the judge could see from the 'trial bundle' ahead of the court date that there was a credible reason why PIP was needed. In Hamza's case, this was showing that while he was capable of furthering his education, he needed extra support at college in order for him to be able to attend.

The judge ruled that Hamza should receive both Enhanced Daily Living and Enhanced Mobility, and awarded both for a period of five years – a fantastic result enabling Hamza to pursue his college dreams!

*Congratulations all round!*

Providing information on claiming benefits and the appeal process is just one of many ways our Family and Carer Services team support those affected by brain injury.



To contact our Family and Carer Services team,  
email [enquiries@headway-bs.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@headway-bs.org.uk)  
or call our Enquiry Line on  
**0121 457 7541**.



## Enriching life after brain injury



Our Lifestyle Services provide opportunities for those with brain injury to do more of what they enjoy in life, and this is especially so with client Sue Harris, who loves getting out and about.

*Thank you to Lifestyle Worker Keeley who took this colourful photo of Sue during a recent visit to the Malvern Spring Festival.*

Lifestyle Services are aimed at supporting people to be active in their local community and enable greater independence. *Please ask for our Referrals team on our main number if interested in accessing this service.*



## Fisherman's Friends!

A grant from Keith & Joan Mindelsohn Charitable Trust has enabled us to buy the equipment needed to run weekly fishing sessions for our Headway House clients over the summer months, something we are all very grateful for.

However, these sessions would not be possible without a trained member of staff to run them and fortunately we have Brain Injury Skills Coach, Sharon Langford, who completed an accredited fishing course a couple of years ago, thanks to funding from The Angling Trust.



Since qualifying, Sharon has found a real love of the sport. She goes fishing with her partner at every opportunity and her catches are the topic of many a conversation! And importantly, she has shared her enthusiasm and acquired expertise with her Headway colleagues, Julie Westwood and Jenny Bennett, who now join Sharon as she takes the group of clients to Alvechurch Fisheries every Tuesday.

None of the five in the Headway House fishing group had ever

fished before and so they completed some basic training before their first session covering safety near the water, angling terminology and how to use each piece of equipment. They are now loving their weekly visit to the fisheries where they get amazing support from Sharon as well as from Julie and Jenny, who, we're told, have both caught, unhooked and landed fish safely, and managed to overcome their fear of maggots! *Well done, all!*





## Birmingham to Blackpool Challenge

Our Sutton House client Steve Lynch set himself the challenge of cycling 124-miles on an exercise bike, the equivalent of travelling from the brain injury hub he attends in Wylde Green all the way to Blackpool Tower! And he not only completed the challenge but smashed his £100 fund-raising target as well!



This was a genuine challenge for Steve, who was involved in a road traffic collision as a child that left him in a coma for many weeks and with a serious brain injury. Thankfully he has made great progress since then, in recent years with support from Headway Birmingham & Solihull.

Steve wanted to do something to show his appreciation for Headway, which, in own words, he describes as “a wonderful place”.

While Steve used the exercise bike in the Headway gym to complete his miles, other clients he knows from Sutton House contributed to the total mileage as they went off-site for their ParkRide sessions. Some staff members also cycled a few miles to help Steve reach his target goal.

The Birmingham to Blackpool Challenge raised over £400 towards our local brain injury services as well as motivating Steve, staff and other clients to be more active.

*Our congratulations go to Steve and all involved!*

## Birmingham to Brighton

While Steve has been cycling to raise much-needed funds for Headway Birmingham & Solihull, others have been running!

In March, Declan Oddy ran Gloucester Half Marathon and raised over £500 in sponsorship then in April, Andrew Stevens (pictured right) ran Brighton Marathon, raising over £1,000. Meanwhile, Laura Walsh, Sam Hannon and Rob Barnett (below) ran the Great Birmingham Run Half Marathon in May, raising over £1,500 between them.



At the time of their run, both Laura and Sam were volunteering with Headway and Laura has since been appointed as

Brain Injury Skills Coach at our Leighton House brain injury hub!

Congratulations to Laura, and huge thanks to all five of our runners for their efforts on our behalf!

With an additional £600 in Gift Aid, together they raised an incredible £3,600 towards our local brain injury services, an amount that will make a real difference to us in these difficult times.

**THANK YOU!**

***We have many volunteering opportunities across a variety of areas - please call!***

## Skydive Success!

**Our charity skydive in May raised an incredible £10,000, thanks to the efforts of the 22 brave souls who took part!**

And this year it was a real mix of people taking to the skies for Headway. One had skydived with us before, two work in our Life-styles team (Andrew Rennie & Jadine Augustine), another two had special T-shirts printed for the occasion while a group of five joined us from local company Compass Group, located just round the corner from Leighton House. Some used it as a motivator to be healthier while others were focused on their fundraising, as their lives have been touched by brain injury.

*Whatever their reasons for signing-up, we are extremely grateful to them all—and want to give a special mention to two of them!*

Kris Shenoi, pictured right, was one of the last people to register for the skydive but managed to top the fundraising leaderboard by raising a whopping £1,678 in sponsorship. *Thank you to Kris and to his very generous family and friends!*



*Ann-Marie, before her jump*

aneurism during the COVID lockdown and had been very well-supported. Thankfully her sister is doing well now, and will undoubtedly be very proud of Anne-Marie for her achievements!

**NOTE - Our next Skydive has been arranged for Saturday 7 September, 2024.** It is just £50 to register then a further £300 in sponsorship (which most people achieve simply by linking in to the Headway Skydive JustGiving page). Email [fundraising@headway-bs.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@headway-bs.org.uk) for information.

*Anne-Marie jumps out of the plane at 13,000ft!*



Anne-Marie Sammon, who describes herself as “a little bit crazy”, had three very different reasons for participating!

Firstly, she celebrated her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday earlier in the year and so thought doing a skydive would be a memorable way to mark the occasion.

Next, she set herself the goal of losing enough weight to be able to take part – and successfully lost FOUR stone, weighing in on the morning of the skydive well below the maximum weight!

And finally, she particularly wanted to do the Headway skydive as her sister, Louise, had an



***Are you looking for a student placement...? Why not give us a call to see if we can help!***



## Garden graft!



**THANKS** to both Rothley Law and Barclays for sending along a group of volunteers to help out with the many gardening chores at Leighton House.

The team of five from Rothley, who were visiting us for the first time, chose a lovely sunny day whereas Barclays (*left*), who have volunteered on several occasions previously, faced relentless rain!

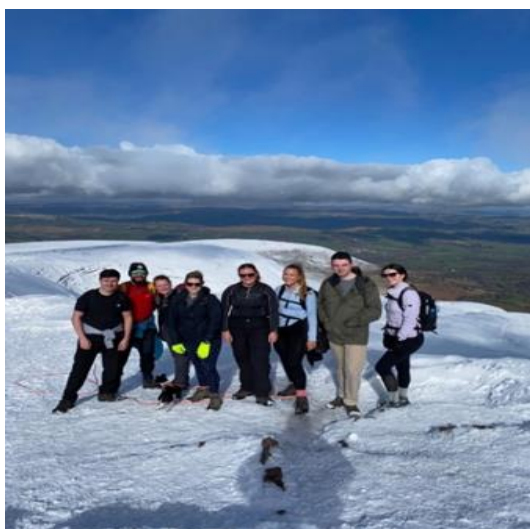
Thankfully, that didn't deter them in the slightest and we were amazed yet again by just how much they achieved in just one day!

## Three Peaks training

As well as grafting in our gardens, Rothley Law have also been hiking in the hills, getting some practice walks in ahead of their 'Trail to the Three Peaks' later this year, all to raise funds for Headway.

They took on a snowy walk in Pen Y Fan in the Brecon Beacons in early spring and then a second hike in May, this time taking on Yr Wyddfa in Snowdon. They completed both hikes in good spirits and within the target time required for the actual challenge.

We send our best wishes to the team for the rest of their training and for the challenge itself in September!



## Lions visit Leighton House!

We would like to say thank you to Kim Beverley (*President - back right*) and Martina Osborne, both from Moseley & Kings Heath Lions Club, for taking time out of their busy schedules to visit our Leighton House brain injury hub.

They were interested to learn more about our charity as they had a tour of the centre, observed a session in progress and chatted to clients directly.

They have since awarded us a grant towards a block of seated dance sessions which will run on a monthly basis until the autumn, and will enhance our clients' lives no end. *Much appreciated, thank you!*



Registered Charity No. 1008798  
Company Reg No 2686647

**Leighton House**  
20 Chapel Rise,  
Birmingham Great Park,  
Rednal,  
Birmingham B45 9SN

**Headway House**  
Moseley Hall Hospital,  
Alcester Road,  
Birmingham B13 8JL

**New Sutton House**  
380-384 Birmingham  
Road,  
Wylde Green,  
Sutton Coldfield B72 1YH

**Website:**  
[www.headway-bs.org.uk](http://www.headway-bs.org.uk)  
[enquiries@headway-bs.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@headway-bs.org.uk)

**Contact telephone:**  
**0121 457 7541**

**Headway Charity Shops:**

**Headway Fashion**  
69 Thornbridge Avenue,  
**Headway Homes**  
71 Thornbridge Avenue,  
Great Barr,  
Birmingham B42 2PW  
Tel: 0121 357 1296

**Headway Fashion**  
183 New Road, Rubery,  
Birmingham B45 9JP  
Tel: 0121 453 4798

