

## Brain Injury Identity Card

### *Supporting brain injury survivors in the criminal justice system*

There are approximately 500,000 people living with the long-term effects of traumatic brain injury in the UK. A brain injury can affect a person's control of their anger and emotions; it can lead to problems with memory and concentration; and can impair a person's ability to process information or communicate effectively.

Brain injury survivors can find themselves coming into contact with the criminal justice system as victims or after being arrested. This can be as a result of their disabilities not being recognised or understood.

Being a victim or being arrested can be a traumatic time for a survivor of a brain injury. They may be confused, afraid and emotional about the situation they find themselves in. They may also experience severe anxiety or anger management issues from being confronted, left alone, being in a noisy environment, or being in a confined space.

The **Brain Injury Identity Card** provided by leading brain injury charity Headway, is designed to help police officers and staff more easily identify brain injury survivors and ensure that they receive an appropriate response.

Its aim is to divert survivors of a brain injury away from the criminal justice system, where appropriate, while ensuring specialist legal representation is available to them.

The benefits of the card include:

- Easy identification of brain injury survivors through clinically verified photo ID cards;
- Access to a unique 24-hour criminal legal helpline to specialist solicitors trained in understanding brain injury

### **What action to take if a card is presented or existing brain injury is suspected in custody:**

- The custody sergeant should be alerted to consider if further medical advice, diversion, or an appropriate adult, is required.
- If a detainee is in possession of a Brain Injury Identity Card or if a brain injury is suspected, legal advice and representation can be requested through our 24-hour helpline:

**0800 140 4031**



## About acquired brain injury

### What is acquired brain injury?

Acquired brain injury refers to any brain injury sustained since birth. This includes strokes, infections, tumours, poisoning, oxygen deprivation and traumatic brain injury.

### What is traumatic brain injury?

Traumatic brain injury is caused by a trauma to the head. The most common causes of traumatic brain injury are road traffic collisions, falls, violent assaults and accidents in the workplace.

### Effects of brain injury

It is important for police officers to be aware of the signs and behaviour that may indicate a brain injury. Behaviour such as appearing drunk, being aggressive or uncooperative could be indicative of a brain injury.

Some of the effects of brain injury which may lead to police involvement with a survivor include, but are not limited to:

- **Mobility or speech problems** which may cause the appearance of inebriation;
- **Emotional/anger problems** which could lead to confrontation;
- **Memory problems** which could lead to forgetting to pay for items before leaving a shop or forgetting to purchase a ticket before travelling on public transport.

Brain injury can also leave people with a reduced tolerance of alcohol, so if alcohol has been consumed, its effect may be magnified.

Some other common effects of brain injury include:

- Information processing difficulties
- Attention and concentration problems
- Decision-making problems
- Disinhibition
- Planning and organisation problems
- Lack of self-awareness
- Impulsivity and lack of self-control
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Anxiety

A survivor of a brain injury may be carrying medication to help treat the effects of their brain injury. It is important that a survivor in custody has access to this medication if required.

**For further information, please contact Liz Partridge, Project Manager: The Justice Project**  
[justiceproject@headway.org.uk](mailto:justiceproject@headway.org.uk)