



10th January 2012

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Headway Cardiff

Dear William Powell,

Headway Cardiff is a registered charity that provides support and services to adults affected by acquired brain injury (ABI), their families and carers throughout south east Wales.

The survivors we assist are adults, but many sustained their injury during childhood and have experienced paediatric neuro-services first hand.

Firstly it is important to acknowledge the lack of accurate statistics relating to ABI due to a combination of shortfalls in the coding system and in the case of minor brain injury, non-identification or mis-diagnosis.

It is also important to not wholly focus on those who are classified as having a severe brain injury. Those with a moderate or even a mild classification have complex, life-long difficulties, that impact on their ability to live an independent life.

Beyond the acute setting, it is vital that children receive a period of specialist neurological intervention. Appropriate, timely specialist intervention can greatly improve the level to which individuals recover and the speed in which this happens.

As the input of the family is crucial at this stage and throughout recovery, this service needs to be as accessible to the family as possible and offer as flexible and as personalised a programme as possible.

Following this intensive period of rehabilitation, a long term community based specialist multi-disciplinary team should be available until the child reaches adulthood and then in theory, there is a seamless transition to specialist adult services.

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It is in the area of community services that the biggest gap appears in adult specialist neuro- services and it is vital that this area is considered in the development of any paediatric service.

Community services in Wales have not kept pace with acute services and the piecemeal nature of services has left many survivors feeling isolated and unsupported leading to crisis and family breakdown. Many of the gains they make in the immediate aftermath are lost due to the lack of ongoing therapy and support.

For those children whose impairments are severe enough to warrant a placement in a specialist educational establishment, ongoing treatment such as Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Physiotherapy is available.

What then happens to those with moderate and mild difficulties, who frequently go undiagnosed, unrecognized or whose difficulties are attributed to behavioral problems?

Who then supports them as the child reaches each new stage of development?

Who then provides the individual with ongoing rehabilitation and strategies?

Who supports the family in ensuring the child's educational needs are recognized and they are stated correctly?

Headway Cardiff wholeheartedly endorses the Petition to the Welsh Government to recognize the need for and to deliver specialist services for the rehabilitation of brain injured children within Wales.

Yours sincerely



Julie Smith
General Manager