

# Towards Independence

For young adults with an Acquired  
or Traumatic Brain Injury



**BE HEALTHY,  
ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING,  
STAYING SAFE,  
MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION  
ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING.**

This leaflet has been produced by  
Kent Acquired Brain Injury Forum  
for young adults and their carers

Towards Independence

## BEING HEALTHY

### Body and Mind

Being fit and healthy, looking good and dressing well is seen as a very important part of life and can help in how you feel about yourself and how you appear to others. This can help in many parts of your life.

- Get fit and be able to do things more easily  
e.g. going to the gym, swimming, walking, playing golf.
- Improve your appearance and feel happier in yourself  
e.g. healthy eating, fashion, make-up

**Here are some tips and advice on how to help yourself.**

### Diet & Exercise:

- Talk to your doctor, physiotherapist or occupational therapist about what exercise is best for you or what skills you might need practice to do to join in your chosen sport.
- Check your local gym for concessionary prices and times when qualified staff are available to support you.
- Check local schools for their sports students who may be able to 'buddy' as part of their courses.

- Ask your GP for diet advice
- See Yellow Pages for local slimming clubs e.g. Weight Watchers, Slimming World, Rosemary Conley classes.

### **Appearance:**

- Check local hair saloons, Further Education Colleges, Beauty Saloons for the days they do concessions and hold trainee days where they offer cut price treatments and make up and hair sessions.
- Check whether local Boots or department stores will provide make-up sessions which could be held at local Headway.
- Local stores like M&S, Debenhams and John Lewis will offer make up lessons and clothing advice if approached.

### **Having an active and healthy mind:**

- Speak to your Dr to ask for help in assessing what you are good at and what you need to do to get better in other areas. (See 'Who can help')
- Computer games – Some offer a very good way to help mental agility, and Nintendo Wiis are proving to be both popular and effective as a form of fitness. On line access allows you to play against other people around the country.

- Specialist shops rent games.
- Do you know someone who has recently upgraded to HD/flat screen TVs and newer gaming machines who would let you have their old equipment.

## **How about asking:**

- Your local Headway Branch if they could hold slimming, hair or beauty sessions at their centre for you and your friends
- Your doctors surgery, local churches, Women's Institutes, if they have a list of volunteer drivers, and possible buddys for when you go to the gym or pool.

## ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING

Living independently and enjoying a normal social life with your friends is important to all young people. At the moment this may not be right for you but with extra support and careful planning you may be able to have more independence and do more

- Living on your own & holidaying
- Having friends, hobbies and a social life

### **Living on your own: Can you do this? Get a balanced view by:**

- Asking for advice from your friends, family, therapists about whether you are able to live on your own or in a flat/house with others.
- Ask your local Housing Association, Council, and Social Services about what is available locally and what benefits you are entitled to.
- Check about bus, and train routes or if you have a car where you can park it so you can still get to work or to see family and friends.

### **Hobbies and pastimes:**

- Make a list of what you like doing and ask for advice to see if you will be able to manage your chosen hobby.
- Check the local colleges, Yellow Pages, internet

for places near to you where you could learn a new skill or carry on with a favourite hobby.

- Not sure what to do? – lots of colleges hold taster session days.
- Can't do an old hobby ie play rugby/dancing – can you help at the club with training or match sessions, organize the social events?

## **Socializing:**

- Ask family and friends for help in Planning your trips and fun times so you know where you are going and where to find everything.
- Ask them to go with you to the café, club, shopping centre as a back up and have a coffee while you shop, meet friends etc till you get confident.
- Check local churches, sport centres, local community social clubs for their programme of events and ask a friend to go with you for a few weeks until you make friends.
- Make sure you have a 'buddy' with you who knows any emergency details and important phone numbers.
- Use safe internet sites for gaming and talking to people with similar interests.

## **Holidaying:**

- Make a list of places you want to visit.
- Make a list of things you want to do on your holiday.
- Ask for advice from your friends and family as to whether you are able to go where you want to and how much help and support you will need.
- Contact travel agents/companies who know about holidays for disabled young people

## **You could also:**

- Contact the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme or local scouting groups to see if they are able to support you doing your chosen activity/holiday.
- Contact local charities to see if they have any holiday opportunities.

## STAYING SAFE

Looking after yourself at home, when you are travelling or out with your friends is very important if you want to be as independent as possible.

- Traveling
- Taking care of yourself in your home
- Taking care of your health
- Behaving safely

Here are some tips and ideas to help you.

### Planning to be safe

- Make sure someone knows where you are at all times.
- You always keep your mobile phone charged and with credit on it.
- Keep your valuable, money and phone in a zipped pocket/bag.
- Carry an emergency contact card and a card describing your brain injury problem.
- Make sure a neighbour/friend has a spare door key.
- Remember strangers are not always to be trusted

**When traveling:**

- Plan your journey before you go.
- If possible practice the journey with a friend.
- Write your plan down so you can read it easily and remember to take it with you.
- Make sure you have someone you can call for help and advice if you have a problem and plans have to change
- Try to travel off-peak when it is quieter.
- Check for travel concessions and disabled accessibility

**When at home:**

- Write a daily schedule of tasks and when to do them. Pin this up where you can see it.
- Ask an Occupational Therapist to review your safety measures and help you learn how to use household gadgets safely.
- Use a microwave instead of a cooker.
- Use an electric kettle and iron with safety cut off switches.
- Install smoke detectors, door chains, door intercoms.
- Set a timer when you run a cooking, running a bath or filling a sink in case you get distracted.
- Put a non-slip mat in your bath/shower tray.
- bath or filling a sink in case you get distracted.
- 'Telecare ' remote care support may help you to live safely and independently.
- The local Fire Service may install fire detectors free of charge

## **Taking care of your health:**

- Draw up a timetable of when you have to take medicines. Put it where you can see it.
- Use labeled pill boxes
- Set timers on your watch, phone to remind you when to take them.

## **Behaving safely:**

(Alcohol, sex, drugs, disinhibition)

- Avoid drinking if possible but if you do know your alcohol limit.
- Make sure you are with friends who know about you and what to do in an emergency.
- Never leave your drink unattended.
- Stick to the plan.....always go home with your friends as arranged.
- Never give your address or phone no. to someone you don't know.
- When you want to see new people meet them in public with friends till you get to know them better.
- Remember and practice strategies for behavior and temper control.

# **MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION & ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING**

Voluntary or paid work can help you to have a sense of purpose and become more independent, feel more capable, improve your social skills, make friends and be 'happier about yourself'.

- Getting back to work, education or training
- Managing Money

## **Getting back to work:**

- Contact local job centre and ask to see Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) for support and advice
- Bring reports of your capabilities from any professionals you have seen or bring a knowledgeable adult with you.
- Talk to DEA about career opportunities, possible training programmes available, supported employment opportunities and benefits you are entitled to.
- Ask for an assessment by an occupational psychologist.
- Contact Connexions to see if they can still help.
- If at college/university talk to welfare officer to see if you need to change courses or what help is available for you.

## **Voluntary work:**

- Visit your local charity organisations to volunteer to work with them e.g. helping in their shops or with fund raising.
- Visit local animal sanctuaries to volunteer to help with their animals.

## **Managing Money**

- Ask for help to help you plan and oversee your budget so that you know how much you need and how much you have left to spend.
- Have money paid into a bank account and your bills put onto direct debits so you never forget to pay them.
- If you haven't got a case manager you can always go to Citizens Advice Bureau for advice about benefits, pensions, awards and claims. They will help you find who you need to talk to.
- Ask a responsible adult to contact an approved solicitor if you feel you need legal advice about any aspect of your life or care.
- The Headway approved solicitors list is a good place to start.

# WHO CAN HELP YOU AND HOW

**Educational Psychologist:** Assesses how you learn and shows you the areas where you are strong or need support.

**Clinical Psychologist:** Assesses your cognitive functioning, areas of disability, and how you process and organize information from the environment. Help with organizing, planning and multi-tasking.

**Occupational Psychologist:** Helps to assess what you can and can't do in relation to work and your career.

**Physiotherapists:** Assesses how you are managing physically and helps to plan programmes to help you

**Occupational Therapists:** Assesses how you are managing with living skills and gives advice about adaptations that may need to be made to where you live.

**Speech and Language Therapists:** Assesses how you understand what is being said to you and the skills you may need for communication.

**Mental Health Services:** Can offer help with counselling and other forms of therapeutic support to help you with problems related to how you are feeling, reacting or behaving as a result of your head injury.

**Social Services** can help with housing, benefits advice, respite care and care packages.

**Driving Assessment and Advice Centre:** Will assess and advise you about whether you will be able to drive a car.

**Headway & Child Brain Injury Trust:** These organizations offer advice and support for you and your family.

**Solicitor:** Independent legal advice. (Headway have lists of approved solicitors)

**Local Council:** Will help with housing, bus passes, parking permits.

## How to find these people

- Check Yellow Pages
- Ask your G.P., Case Manager, KABIF, Headway
- Ask at your local job centre
- Ask a friend to help.
- Citizens' Advice Bureau

## Who may be able to help pay for these services

- Local Authority
- Education Authority
- NHS
- A Charity

## CONTACT DETAILS

Kent Acquired Brain Injury Forum	<a href="http://www.kabif.org.uk">www.kabif.org.uk</a> <a href="mailto:francespierce@rixandkay.co.uk">francespierce@rixandkay.co.uk</a> Tel 01825 745360
Headway	<a href="http://www.headway.org.uk">www.headway.org.uk</a> Freephone 0808 8002244
Child Brain Injury Trust	<a href="http://www.cbituk.org">www.cbituk.org</a> Phone 0845 601439
Local Authority, Social Services, Telecare	<a href="http://www.kent.gov.uk">www.kent.gov.uk</a> Freephone 0845 8247247
Jobcentre Plus/DEA	<a href="http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk">www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk</a>
NHS Direct	<a href="http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk">www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk</a> Freephone 08454647
Independent Mental Capacity Advocate Service	<a href="http://www.dhgov.uk">www.dhgov.uk</a> Email <a href="mailto:IMAC@dh.qsi.gov.uk">IMAC@dh.qsi.gov.uk</a>
Dart Driving Assessment & Advice Centre	Tel 01622 795719 Email <a href="mailto:Julie.chatburn@nhs.net">Julie.chatburn@nhs.net</a>
Citizens Advice Bureau	<a href="http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk">www.citizensadvice.org.uk</a> Phone 08701 264062
Connexions Kent & Medway	<a href="http://www.connexions-direct.com">www.connexions-direct.com</a> Phone 0808 0013218
Samaritans	Tel 0845 7909090
United Kingdom Acquired Brain Injury Forum	<a href="http://www.ukabif.org.uk">www.ukabif.org.uk</a> Tel 01752 601318
Individual Conditions i.e. stroke, epilepsy	See KABIF Website for details of the different associations

## **WE HOPE THE INFORMATION HERE SHOWS YOU THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

Being seen as 'normal' came across as the main priority from the study we carried out with a group of young adults with an Acquired Brain Injury and the people who support them.

We hope this guidance will give you ideas and starting points which will help you achieve as much independence as is possible.

Please feel free to contact anyone from KABIF for support and advice and if we can't help I am sure we will know someone who can.

Our thanks go to all the people who contributed to this project by completing questionnaires and offering practical suggestions.

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KABIF: [www.kabif.org.uk](http://www.kabif.org.uk)

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