

## British Psychological Society- The Acquired Brain Injury Bill

The British Psychological Society, the representative body for psychology and psychologists in the UK, urges MPs to support the Acquired Brain Injury Bill, which will require the Government to consult on and publish an Acquired Brain Injury strategy for improving public service provision for people with acquired brain injury and to keep this strategy under review.

Acquired brain injury (ABI) refers to any type of brain damage that occurs after birth. It is extremely common, as demonstrated by [a report from the Centre for Mental Health](#) which found that around 1.3 million people in the UK are living with head injury-related disabilities. Additionally, a [report from the brain injury association Headway](#) has suggested that there were approximately 956 ABI admissions per day to UK hospitals in 2013-14, or one every 90 seconds.

The main causes of ABI are: stroke illnesses in older groups and traumatic injury in younger groups – usually from road accidents, falls, assaults and sports injuries. Repeated concussive brain injuries are common in contact and high speed sports (rugby, horse riding, skateboarding), and particularly prevalent amongst armed forces personnel and victims of domestic abuse. Some populations (e.g. those who are excluded from schools and those in prisons) have high levels of ABI.

There are many areas in public services with gaps in respect to support for people with ABI. For example:

- Those with ABI need **tailored care** from trained neuro-rehabilitation specialists and routine access to clinical neuropsychologists to optimise recovery, of which there is a national shortage.
- **Educational professionals need to be trained** to have a minimum level of awareness and understanding in order for them to be able identify what specific **educational support** is needed for children and young people with ABI.
- **Criminal justice procedures, practices and processes need to be reformed** to take into account the needs of individuals with ABI, particularly given that they are significantly over-represented within the criminal justice system.
- **Sport, Government and professional clinical bodies** must have a more robust framework in place for identifying and managing **sports-related concussion**.
- Given that many individuals with ABI may be unable to work in the short or long-term, and that the cognitive problems brought about by ABI make application for **Welfare Benefits extremely challenging**, it is important that the benefits assessors are informed about the experiences and difficulties of those with ABI in order to make necessary and fair accommodations.

Given the breadth of the impact of ABI on public life, it is an issue relevant to the Departments of Health and Social Care; Work and Pensions; Education; and Digital, Culture, Media & Sport; and the Ministries of Justice; Defence; and Housing, Communities and Local Government. Though there has been progress in collaboration between Government departments to some extent, a statutory obligation is necessary as it will ensure all departments cooperate fully to enable cross-Government working on issues for those with ABI in the immediate and the long term.