



Press Release

Minister John Moloney unveils new Community Brain Injury Transitional Living Unit in Sligo

Monday, 24 May 2010 Minister John Moloney, T.D., Minister for Disability and Mental Health today officially opened a Transitional Living Unit in Sligo for people with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). The Acquired Brain Injury Service, a partnership between the HSE and Acquired Brain Injury Ireland (ABI Ireland) supports people with a brain injury in Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan to return to independent living. It provides support and assistance to enable each individual to develop their full potential, retain maximum independence and improve opportunities for full inclusion into the community.

The Community Brain Injury Transitional Living Unit provides a diverse and innovative range of specialist rehabilitation services for people with an acquired brain injury (ABI) to help them regain independence and re-learn everyday life skills often lost to them as a result of their injury.

In Ireland, more than 13,000 people each year acquire a brain injury and of these 10,000 are admitted to hospital with significant injuries. These injuries may be caused by trauma such as an assault or road traffic accidents, a stroke or a brain haemorrhage.

The unit is staffed by a Manager and a Team of Rehabilitation Assistants with support from multi-disciplinary clinical experts including a Clinical Psychologist, Senior Occupational Therapist and Case Co-Ordinator. The unit has the capacity to accommodate three people in residence and one person in respite and is operational five days per week and in exceptional circumstances at weekends.

The innovative approach adopted by the unit is illustrated in supporting people with an ABI in rehabilitation projects such as the restoration of a 1950s BSA Bantam Motorcycle, and the development of an organic garden at the service, which Minister Moloney had the pleasure of viewing today at the opening.

Speaking at the official opening, Minister Moloney said; "Firstly I wish to congratulate both the HSE and Acquired Brain Injury Ireland for their imaginative approach to the development of this co-ordinated and integrated service. Individuals affected by a brain injury often face a dramatically altered life. The service offers support to both the individual and their loved ones as a brain injury has consequences for the whole family.

“It is inspiring to see such a successful partnership between ABI Ireland and the HSE in opening this Unit. I also applaud the creative use of resources and the expertise the partnership has brought together. I wish all involved continued success both with the present service and any future developments”.

Barbara O’Connell, CEO of Acquired Brain Injury Ireland said, “Every person affected by brain injury is unique and I firmly believe that with the correct environment and appropriate supports people with ABI can live a meaningful life in the community. We work by the ethos that by maximising ability, you can change lives.

“Since our establishment 10 years ago, we have continually expanded our services to help those with the greatest need. We now provide assisted living, transitional living, community rehabilitation, day resource services and rehabilitation and support teams throughout Ireland. The demand for our services has never been greater and our partnership with the HSE has resulted in this specialised new service which provides people with ABI the opportunity to re-learn the skills necessary to return home or live independently.”

Mr Pat Dolan, Local Health Manager for Sligo/Leitrim said, “The role of the Community Brain Injury Service, Sligo/Leitrim & West Cavan is to support the clients and their families after discharge from hospital and to enable them to achieve independence and return to their rightful place in the Community.

“The Community Brain Injury Service encompasses a Post Acute Monitoring Service, Case Coordinator Service, Residential Transitional Rehabilitation Unit, Brain Injury Rehabilitation Programme, Family Support Service, Leisure and Lifestyle Programme and a Community Outreach Service. In 2009, an average of 44 people per month availed of one or more of the Community Brain Injury Services.

“The partnership between the HSE and Acquired Brain Injury Ireland ensures a continuum of care and service delivery for individuals with a brain injury, from the acute stage right through their period of rehabilitation and community resettlement.”

Kathleen, service user said, “It is clear to me how valuable the Community Brain Injury Service is. It has made such a difference to my life. My acquired brain injury did change my life but the important thing is that it did not finish my life either. Through the help of the Community Rehabilitation Services, I have once again equipped myself with skills to cope with any minor difficulties I have as a result of my brain injury.”

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Editors Notes**About Acquired Brain Injury Ireland**

ABI is a silent epidemic which affects more than 10,000 people in Ireland every year. Commissioned by the HSE, ABI Ireland provides a wide range of supports and services to people with ABI throughout Ireland.

Established in 2000, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland (formerly the Peter Bradley Foundation) was set up to provide a range of pioneering, flexible and tailor-made services to people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). The services provided by the organisation place a critical emphasis on client-centeredness, quality, effectiveness and value for money. Rehabilitation and clinical support are key aspects to the service.

Approximately 10,000 people suffer from a head injury in Ireland each year and face a dramatically altered life thereafter. People with ABI progress at different rates, and may need to access services at different points in time as their needs change. Within each stage of rehabilitation a range of different service providers is involved, which must be co-ordinated. Once back in the community the emphasis is on more extended activities of daily living, integration, and return to work or education. Interventions focus on enhanced participation, improved quality of life, psychological adjustment and carer stress. Acquired Brain Injury Ireland is filling a vital service gap, in collaboration with statutory bodies.

Background HSE

In 2001, the North Western Health Board identified significant deficits in the provision of services for persons with physical, visual or hearing disability, including persons with an acquired brain injury. This led to the establishment of a "Physical & Sensory Disability Service" with dedicated resources.

The Community Brain Injury Service evolved with the appointment of innovative posts including a key worker to support individuals with a brain injury, a Neuropsychologist and an Occupational Therapist.

A key philosophy of Physical & Sensory Disabilities is to work in partnership with voluntary sector service providers and in 2006 this led to the unique partnership with Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, which now forms the basis of the Community Brain Injury Service, Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan. The unit became operational in 2007.

The partnership between ABI Ireland and the HSE resulted in additional staff being dedicated to providing specialised services to individuals with a brain injury, including a Local Service Manager, a Team of Rehabilitation Assistants and an Assistant Psychologist.

The Community Brain Injury Support Service includes:

- Residential & Respite Service at the Community Brain Injury Transitional Living Unit in Sligo;
- Home and Community Outreach - This service is provided by the Rehabilitation Assistants and is recommended for some clients following a period of rehabilitation at the house, to ensure continuity of care into the community;
- Home Support Services - Hours of service are approved following application to the HSE's Home Support Committee. These hours are put in place through the Home Help Department of the HSE and other Voluntary Groups such Irish Wheelchair Association and Sligo Centre for Independent Living;
- Clinical Support and Case Management - Clinical Support and assessment is part of the Rehabilitation Programme at the Unit and is the responsibility of the Clinical Psychologist and Senior

Occupational Therapist. This programme extends into the community as Community & Rehabilitation work placements/groups; and

□ A Family Support Programme also commenced for the families of persons referred to the service.

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