

WEST - NORTH-WEST REGIONAL NEWS



Welcome to the first edition 2011 of the regional newsletter for ABI Ireland's North West/Western Region. The last six months since our summer 2010 edition have seen services actively involved in raising awareness of acquired brain injury locally. Employees across the region were heavily involved in events during March's National Brain Awareness Week; including bake for brain injury cake sales, information talks, and charity events such as the innovative and painful waxathon at Sligo IT.

The last few months have also seen the coming together of plans for a new pilot ABI clubhouse in Castlebar, Co. Mayo, which if successful may provide a creative service solution which is value for money in these times of fiscal austerity. The last few months also saw some faces leave and new ones arrive, so a fond farewell to Emma Daley who was the assistant psychologist in Sligo, and a happy hello to Sophie O'Dea who takes on this role at the TLU.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the regional newsletter, and I wish to thank all contributors, and the newsletter group in Sligo, with a special thanks going to Sharon Cawley (social studies- Sligo IT).

Happy reading,

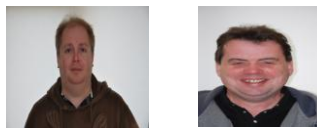
Steve,

Steve Orme
West/Northwest Regional Manager.

The West/Northwest Region welcomes new members of the Team.



From left: Patrick Broderick and Dorota Wajszczuk, Rehabilitation Assistant. Sophie O'Dea - Assistant Psychologist, Sligo TLU



From left: Jason Quinn and Brian Mc Cafferty- Rehabilitation Assistants Residential Services Donegal.

Galway

Bake for Brain Injury – Monday 7th March a local Secondary School Colaiste Iognaid's transition year students, joined with Acquired Brain Injury Ireland to **'Bake for Brain Injury'** The proceeds of 'Cup Cakes' were donated toward fundraiser for Acquired Brain Injury Ireland. The morning was concluded by an Educational talk on the effects of Brain injury on young people and was presented by Imelda Walsh Resource Worker.



Transition Year Students Colaiste Iognaid.

March 16th – Coffee Morning in Galway Office to highlight Brain Awareness week with staff baking the goodies and positive attendance from family/friends and local businesses within the area.

Galway Stroke Support Group

The **Galway Stroke Group** was established in 2003. It provides support and a much needed social network for the Galway area for people with stroke. This is vital to assist with the essential rehabilitation in the community .

The group helps people learn more about stroke, share their experiences and become inspired to move forward after their stroke. A stroke can be very isolating. By meeting regularly the group is a place where members help one another face and overcome challenges by sharing experiences and encouraging one another: friends socialise and get practical advice.



Galway Stroke Group Christmas Lunch December 2010 at the West Wood Hotel, Galway with special guest Rose of Tralee - Clare Kambamettu

We would like to acknowledge and thank the company **Merck & Co** for sponsoring the Groups Christmas lunch at the Westwood Hotel in December 2010. This year we were delighted to have as our Guest, the **Rose of Tralee** -Clare Kambamettu.

The Galway Stroke Group is a group of stroke survivors and their family/Carers who meet up on the 2nd Tuesday of every month 2.30 to 4.30pm. Contact Imelda Walsh **Acquired Brain Injury Ireland** at 091 700210.



Some of committee members of Galway Stroke Group; Caitriona Conroy Social Worker & her daughter Bridget, Clare Kambamettu Rose of Tralee Guest, Donal Gill, Social Worker HSE and Imelda Walsh ABI Ireland.

Brain Aware – Carers Training Galway 2010- 2011

From November to Jan 2011 Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, ran a very successful training programme called '**Brain Aware**' for those caring for people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) in Galway. Funded by Pobal, ABI training programme allowed carers to develop their knowledge of an acquired brain injury and its effects on individual and family life.

It was held in the Westwood Hotel, Galway in a supportive environment where the carers came together to share information and learn from each other's experiences and knowledge.

The modules of the programmed helped carers to better understand ABI and its effects of brain injury on a person's emotions, behaviour, communications, attention, and memory. Attendees learnt how to cope with the emotional and psychological aspects of the role of 'carer' and how ABI can affect the family environment. New friendships and peer support were formed within the group. A reunion of the group will take place in June 2011 in Galway.

The sessions were run by staff members of ABI Ireland and external professionals.

Mayo

Club House – Castlebar, (Pilot project) March 2011

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Ireland is in the process of setting up a club house in Castlebar by April 2011. This will be a pilot project till year end. It will be a 2 day services for individuals with an acquired brain injury in Mayo. The mission of an Acquired Brain Injury Clubhouse is to enable creative learning opportunities in a safe environment, promoting growth and confidence for people with ABI. A club house is first and foremost a community of people working towards the common goal of recovery. Individuals attending the clubhouse are known as 'Members'. The clubhouse setting offers members a supportive environment in which members can work alongside staff in planning and operating the service. Members participate in mutually planned every day activities including vocational, educational and social activities. Activities may be grouped or individualised.

Mayo Head Injuries Support Group

Monthly meetings are held at the Family Life Centre, Castlebar on the 3rd Monday of the Month at 7.30 pm

Family and Carers are all welcome to attend. Facilitated by Peggy Corcoran – contact Ned Rispin (Brí) on 0863821033.

Donegal

Brain Injury awareness week

In the Donegal service we arranged a coffee morning for Brain Injury awareness week. It was held in the Station House hotel Letterkenny on Thursday 10th March 2011. We Raised €180.56 Thanks to all those who donated money to the service, it is very much appreciated.

We would also like to thank all those who donated cakes/Buns for "Bake for Brain injury" stall which we had there on the day also. In particular Veronica Doherty, Thomas James , Grace Lagan, Geraldine Sheerin, Jennifer Bye, Michelle Lagan, Jason Quinn and person served Declan Hughes.



From left to right; Staff members with Declan Hughes in centre of photograph.

We had a presentation on "Changes in Behaviour following an Acquired Brain injury" presented by Dr Mark Hogan (clinical psychologist) and finished up with a question and answers session.

ABI Ireland information stand at the Adelaide Motorcycle Festival, Belfast (10th- 11th February 2011)



Left to right Brendan Peoples(RA) and Declan Hughes.

Thank you Geraldine-Student Placement.

The Staff in Donegal would like to thank Student, Geraldine Sheerin. Geraldine is doing a third year social studies degree in Sligo. She was with the service for 13 weeks and did a great job.

She was reluctant to have her photo taken but is pictured here supporting person served Declan with cookery class.



Geraldine has written a small article on her experiences in working with ABI Ireland.

"My name is Geraldine Sheerin and as part of my 3rd year in applied social studies in I.T. Sligo I carried out thirteen weeks placement with the Co. Donegal Service of ABI Ireland in Letterkenny. Going into this placement I knew very little about the organisation, in fact, I had never even heard of Acquired Brain Injury at all. Now, I have finished my time on placement and I can safely say that it was one of the best experiences I could have asked for.

I worked mainly in the residential assisted living setting in Letterkenny but also helped out with various outreach and day services provided by the organisation. From this I got a great all round feel of the different types of work that the Donegal team are involved in. As a student coming into the service the staff and person served in the Letterkenny service made feel completely at ease and one of the 'family'. The warm atmosphere in the service is one of co-operation and understanding. What I was really impressed with was the organisation's main aim to improve the quality of life of its service users and how they are so committed to developing services that enable each individual achieve personal and meaningful goals in their daily life. I quickly learned that these goals could be something as simple as climbing a flight of stairs or going to the shops. Tasks, which many people take completely for granted, but, can make a huge difference for someone with an Acquired brain injury. While on placement I was given a real first-hand look at the brilliant work that staff in ABI Ireland carry out every day assisting person served with their

rehabilitation; example, speech and language in Letterkenny itself or even neurologist appointments as far as Dublin, Also I helped with assisting person served on their daily routines and social outings, which really gave me a chance to see how much person served benefit from getting services from ABI Ireland resulting in being able to get out and interact in the community daily. The service users that I was working with in the service also were brilliant and very pleasant to work with. I managed to build good professional relationships with each service user and all seemed co-operative and pleased with the services we were providing. As part of my course work for college I also had to come up with an intervention of choice with a service user that would improve their quality of life. I chose to develop a one-to-one cooking session every week with a service user in the assisted living house in Letterkenny. The aim was to provide key independent living skills such as cooking and money management in order to enable the service user to gain a greater sense of autonomy and independence. During this process we planned out meals and shopping lists needed for each meal and carried out shopping in the community where possible. Through this intervention I believe that the service user has learned vital independent living skills as we cooked such thing as shepherd's pie, fruit salad, even a sponge cake and apple pie for the National 'Bake for Brain Injury' campaign in which we then sold at the annual coffee morning in Letterkenny held by the service, which was very successful. Overall my experience with ABI Ireland and the Letterkenny service in particular has been extremely worthwhile and rewarding. I learned so much about the effects of brain injury on those that suffer from it and the amount of hard work that goes into ensuring the best possible services are available for service users to maintain a meaningful quality of living. The staff and service users that I was working with in the Letterkenny service are a huge credit to the Organisation with the hard work and commitment I seen on my time on placement. I have brought from my time on placement the knowledge that an acquired brain injury can happen to anyone at any time in their life and the services provided by ABI Ireland are without question vital in giving those who suffer from an Acquired Brain Injury the chance to the standard of living and independence they deserve".

She's back

We would like to welcome staff member Karen back after the birth of

her second beautiful baby boy "Scott" Gallagher who was born on 30th November 2011 and weighed 7lb 8oz.

He arrived in the height of the Big Freeze and poor Karen and John Paul had to head off in her brother in law Ciaran's jeep in the early hours of the morning through the snow, just when you thought it couldn't get any worse the ambulance that was meeting them got stuck on the other side, Scott decided to come early and was born in the jeep on the roadside in Kilmacrennan just before the paramedics arrived.

Coronation Street wouldn't have a look in!!

We are delighted to welcome Karen back and hope that Scott and David won't miss her too much.



Karens beautiful baby Scott.

Christmas

Pictured here from left are Declan Hughes, Tina Doogan, Brian Mc Cafferty, Marie James and Cathal Murray heading to the Christmas Party in the Silver tassie which was attended by community and residential person serveds.



Charlie Breslin, Michelle Lagan. Michael o Connell, Enjoying the carol singers.

Sligo

The Sligo team would like to express their immense gratitude to Sean MacGowan husband of Rehabilitation Assistant Concepta,. Sean raised the

whopping sum of €1,280 from a recent head-shave. Well done Sean, and thanks again!



ABI Fundraising Cycle

On the 29th August last year a group of approximately 50 brave volunteers (including 2 person serveds and 3 staff) left Letterkenny to cycle to Sligo, a journey of just over 70 miles.

After an initial wet and windy start to the day, it brightened up and the weather was ideal.



The sandwich team!

A huge team effort was involved in organising this event but it proved very worthwhile financially, raising approximately €16,000. All involved found it to be an extremely enjoyable and fulfilling experience.

We would like to thank all who helped in any way to make this such a successful event – cyclists, bucket collectors, Civil defence sponsors, and Gardai,



Four cyclists at registration

Cooking up a Storm – Pancake Day with the Cookery Group

The cooking group meets at the Family Life Centre in Sligo, and runs for six weeks at a time. It is a great opportunity to increase planning and organisational skills, which all participants thoroughly enjoy. Of course, there is an added fun side to cooking, along with the chance to exchange new healthy-eating recipes with other group members.



From left: Caroline Healy, Debra Heanue and Aneta Lapakowska, Woodwork Group

By combining cognitive strategies developed during the process of rehabilitation, the group work together on a range of projects throughout the year, with sessions taking place bi-monthly at the Northside Community Centre's workshop in Sligo town. The group is another example of the functional therapy approach utilised by ABI Ireland; as it combines opportunities for therapeutic follow-through skill acquisition and practice in real-life settings.



From left: Michael Gillespie and Vincent Murray

In the above picture are members of the Woodwork Group in Sligo putting the finishing touches to their latest project: beautifully crafted lockers to be used by staff at the TLU.



Planting of Apple Trees,

The apple trees were very kindly donated by, Brian Drumm the husband of the late Dr Niamh Nangle

ABI Christmas Dinner by Michael Carroll



This was my first time to go to the Christmas dinner. When I opened the door I was met with smiles and

friendly faces as usual at the Unit. The night started with some singing from a local choir group and we all joined in – not that we were great singers I add! After that we had what I can only describe as a fabulous meal, so thanks to the ABI staff who made it; it was of a very high standard and enjoyed by all. After dinner we all joined in with a few party games. This was followed by storytelling and some music, song and dance, which everyone joined in with and had lots of fun. It was a great night that everybody really enjoyed and there are lots of pictures to prove it. Looking forward to next year already!

Social Club

The “social club” is now 3 years in operation and continues to grow, with 15 person served who attend regularly. We try to include a variety of events and participating person served request all activities.

During 2010, we met twice monthly, excluding August. We went bowling, had meals out in various restaurants, we went to bingo, shopping trips a snooker night, visited Arigna Mines, cinema trips, social coffees and attended various theatre shows

If you have any ideas as to what you would like to see included in the 2011 schedule of events, or would like to be included on the mailing list please contact the TLU on 071 9153472.

Person served stars on TV3

Lorraine Molloy was involved in a road traffic accident in December 2008. Following a month of hospitalization Lorraine resided in the TLU for 4 months.

Lorraine completed an interview re her experiences following brain injury and a large article was printed in the “Daily Mail”. Following this, TV3 contacted Lorraine and she was interviewed on their morning show on 18th June 2010.



Personal Story

Mary Brennan – Driver Theory

Because of our car dependent society and the independence driving provides, one of the more commonly asked questions after a person has a brain injury is, “When can I start driving again?”

Despite being a driver prior to her ABI in 2006, Mary Brennan was immediately concerned that it meant an end to her driving once and for all. “My consultant told me to give it six months to see how I got on. Looking back now his words were really important to me as they gave me hope”, said Mary. “The last thing you want to be told is you would never drive again” she added, convinced it was those words that gave her the motivation she needed to reach her main rehabilitative goal. To the delight of her family and friends, not to mention Mary herself, she recently passed her driver theory test and is back behind the wheel once more.

Luckily Mary did not suffer from any problems that might have prevented her from driving, and was permitted

to drive by her doctor. With the help of her key worker, Mary prepared for the theory test using a DVD, working alongside Jean for 2 hours each week at the TLU until the day of the test. “It was something new and I really got stuck in, although it was a war of wills at times” said Mary, who was not familiar with using a computer beforehand. “The mouse sometimes had one idea and me another!” she joked. But Mary is keen to emphasise that this should not put anyone off, as a touch-screen computer is used at the test centre. In fact, “the staff there could not have been more helpful”, she says. “Jean, my key worker, arranged a visit before the test-day itself, so I could have a look around and be familiar with the surroundings, and the staff assured me I could have extra time if I needed it. On the day of the test I felt very nervous, but Jean put me at ease, as she had me laughing before I went in!” said Mary.

Passing her theory test means an awful lot to Mary because driving has given her more freedom, which she feels, is really important for her independence. Asked if she had any tips for those resuming driving after a brain injury, Mary advises building in extra time for your journey, “as worrying about being late is the last thing you need to do” she cautions.

All the Sligo staffs wishes Mary many happy and safe years of motoring.

Upcoming events.

Sunday 12th June – Car Treasure Hunt starting in Sligo. Cost €20 per car. For further details phone 071 9153472