



The Brain Injury Social Work Group
connecting brain injury professionals

WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our latest newsletter

It has been a difficult year for everyone, especially those who have lost friends and family members to COVID – our thoughts go out to all those whose lives have been affected. We would also like to pay tribute to the enormous efforts of those working in health and social care settings who have continued to work through the lockdowns under tremendous pressure.

Last year BISWG Trustees made an early decision to cancel all events in 2020, with the exception of a few online regional meetings. It has been an unusually quiet year where we focussed our efforts on drawing together an application to the National Institute for Health Research (Research for Social Care). This was finally submitted in the third week of January. If successful, the project will review social work training settings to identify where brain injury training takes place and will suggest a future programme. The work was submitted jointly with representatives from a number of universities and specialists in the brain injury field. We hope to bring you good news about the outcome of the application later in the year.

Best wishes

Jackie Burt, BISWG Chair

MBE for Jackie Burt in The New Year Honours



Congratulations to Jackie Burt, Chair of the Brain Injury Social Work Group (BSWIG), who was awarded an MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in The New Year Honours 2021 list for her work with people with brain injuries.

Jackie said: "I was surprised and delighted to receive the MBE. I've been very lucky to have worked with great people over the years, and I've been able to help many individuals with brain injuries. There is a huge lack of education and understanding within the social work profession about brain injury and this is exactly what BISWG is trying to address through its publications, training and education."

Jackie has many years of experience in the field; after qualifying as a Social Worker in 1985, she began her career with the Mental Health team at Moorhaven Hospital near Plymouth. She later joined the Neurology Team at Derriford Hospital where a strong multidisciplinary approach was important for managing people with neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease, brain tumours, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, epilepsy and acquired brain injury (ABI).

Continued on page 2

Dr Melanie George – obituary

It was with great sadness that the BISWG Trustees learned about the recent death of Dr Melanie George who was a Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist in Kent.



Melanie's extensive work in the field of ABI is renowned. The many publications that Melanie and her colleagues published have influenced the need for change, particularly the report 'Mental Capacity Act assessments: why everyone needs to know about the frontal lobe paradox', produced in conjunction with Dr Sam Gilbert.

BISWG was fortunate that Melanie was able to work and support the organisation by attending Parliamentary meetings, and producing templates to assist assessments. Melanie was keen for BISWG to use her work to inform practice, and as a fitting legacy, the organisation will ensure that it is included in its training agenda to encourage the skills and practices of the social work profession.

From left to right: Dr Katherine Carpenter – British Psychological Society, Dr Melanie George, Chloë Hayward, Emma Lewell-Buck MP, Dr Camilla Herbert, Dr Sam Gilbert, Dr Mark Holloway.

Continued...

Over the years Jackie worked extensively with occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, psychologists, clinicians and commissioners. She has a great deal of experience of local authority social work in the neurorehabilitation setting, including arranging complex discharge packages for individuals who have experienced life changing events, and supporting their families.

After developing a special interest in ABI, Jackie joined the BISWG committee in 2007 and became a Trustee after the organisation gained charity status in 2009.

Jackie established and manages the South West ABI Forum for professionals working in the field. She now works as a Case Manager in the South West.

News from INSWABI

The International Network of Social Workers in Acquired Brain Injury (INSWABI) continues to go from strength to strength, raising the profile of social work in the field of ABI and ABI in the field of social work internationally.

INSWABI's website is gathering increasing interest. As well as including resources, research and publications, Professor Grahame Simpson has added an interesting podcast on social work with ABI: [visit https://www.inswabi.org/](https://www.inswabi.org/)

The organisation is developing an international tool for the psychosocial assessment of people with ABI; the first two stages, a literature review and survey are now complete. The next stage will be to undertake focus groups.

Online – Ahead Together Conference

After the success of the Royds Withy King Ahead Together conference in 2019, the company launched Ahead Together 2021.

The conference takes place later this year with an impressive line-up of speakers who will explore the impact of brain injury on family identity. This informative day will include the latest clinical and research evidence, personal accounts of family members, provide a unique perspective on the needs of families, and look at how professionals and families can work more effectively together towards improved outcomes.

For further information about the conference please call 0800 923 2073 or email events@roydswithyking.com

For tickets and further information <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ahead-together-2021-supporting-family-identity-after-brain-injury-tickets-128731694965?aff=RWKpage>

Capacity to consent to sexual relations and engage in sexual activity – new judgement

A recent Court of Appeal judgment has overturned previous case law and stated that a potential sexual partner's right to say no is critical in determining capacity. This will have a significant impact on the assessment of individuals with learning disabilities or brain injuries.

The judgement follows previous judgments in the Court of Protection (CoP) regarding a young man in his thirties, referred to as JB, who has a complex diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder combined with impaired cognition. JB lives in a supported-living placement with a highly restrictive package of care in all aspects of his life. Because of his autism JB struggles with understanding social nuances, engaging in appropriate communication with women (to whom he is attracted), and the ability to recognise if a partner is able to consent or is consenting both before and during any sexual encounter.

JB freely admitted to having sexual needs as well as a wish to have a romantic relationship that could include a sexual element. He wants to be normal but his care plan is such that he can never be in a position to be able to meet a potential partner, and he objects to this restriction on his freedom. The Local Authority had made several applications to the Court to prevent JB from having a sexual relationship.

This recent Court of Appeal judgment states that the capacity to 'engage' in sexual relations is important. The Court has balanced three fundamental principles of public interest. The first principle is the principle of autonomy which is at the heart of the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 and case law under that Act. It underpins the purpose of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) "to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity." The second principle is that vulnerable people in society require protection when they are placed in particularly vulnerable circumstances and situations. There is now an important third principle for consideration; the MCA and CoP do not exist in a vacuum; they are part of a wider system of law and justice that states "Sexual relations between two people can only take place with the full and ongoing consent of both parties."

The first two concepts of autonomy and protection have kept social workers challenged for many years. Assessing the capacity to engage in sex which clearly involves the consent of the partner now presents an additional challenge. How do professionals prepare these adults for the possibility that the other person may say 'no' or 'stop'? This will be the subject of much discussion for social work professionals.

Research update – interesting studies for members and readers

Grayson L, Brady MC, Togher L et al. The impact of cognitive communication difficulties following traumatic brain injury on the family: a qualitative focus group study. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02699052.2020.1849800> (accessed January 2021).

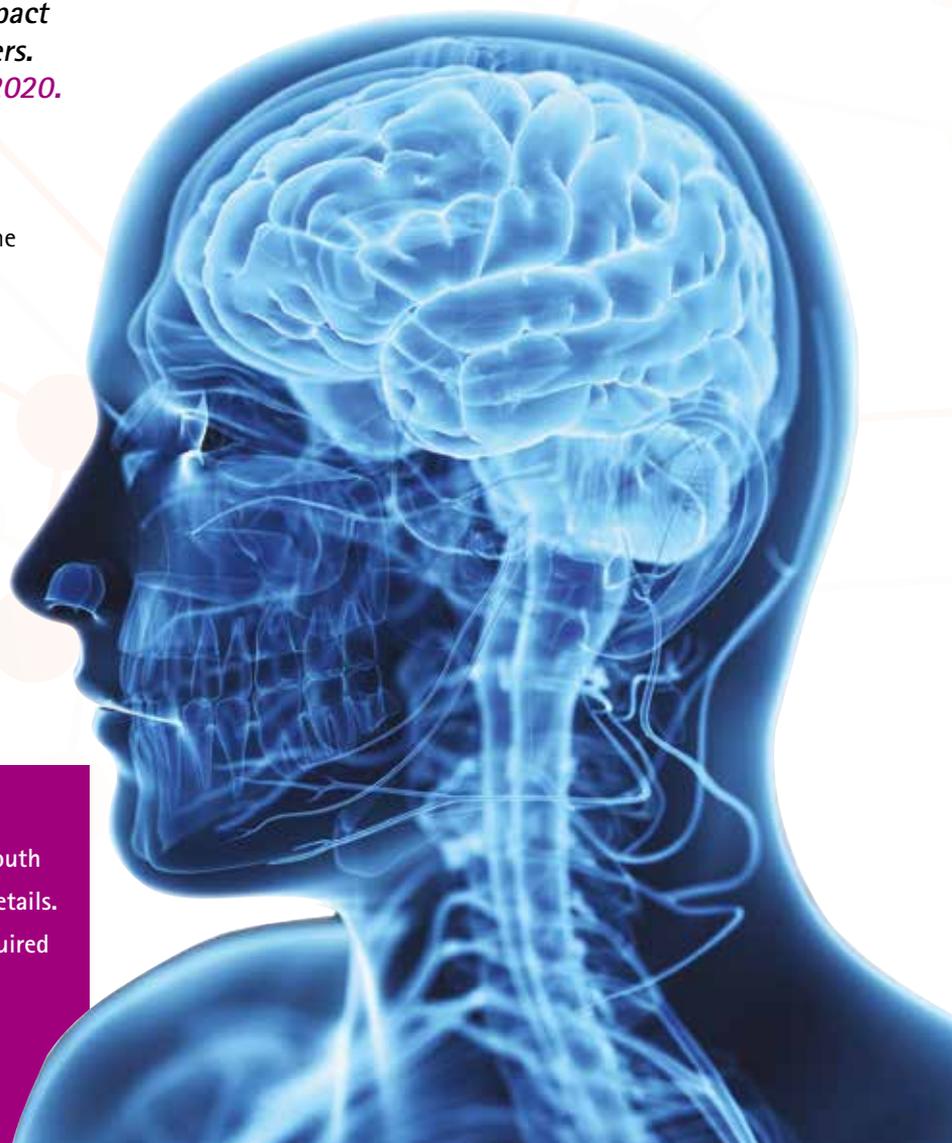
Grayson *et al*, using qualitative focus group methodology, looked at how 15 family members and participants experience cognitive-communication difficulties following Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Their experiences of information, training and support for managing communication changes were also explored. The authors found that cognitive-communication difficulties impact upon family functioning and psychological wellbeing for many years following TBI, with families continuing to have communication support needs well beyond the acute rehabilitation stage. The results highlighted the need for information about communication changes to be provided at several time points post-injury. The need for peer support from other families with experience of cognitive-communication difficulties was also identified.

O'Sullivan M, Fitzsimons S, Ramos S et al. Characteristics and neuropsychological impact of traumatic brain injury in female prisoners. 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699052.2020.1858344> (accessed January 2021).

Domestic abuse is a frequently report cause of head injury (HI) in female prisoners. This study looked at the characteristics of head injury (HI) and its association with offending behaviour, psychological and neurobehavioral functioning, and cognitive performance in female prisoners. The results showed that psychosocial factors such as trauma may contribute to higher rates of violent offending and imprisonment in those female prisoners with HI, and those with a HI that present with a loss of consciousness. Forensic screening and interventions need to be designed, adapted and evaluated in consideration of such trauma and HI.

*Norman A, Holloway M, Odumuywa O et al. Accepting what we do not know: a need to improve professional understanding of brain injury in the UK. *Health Soc Care Community*, 2020 Nov;28(6):2037–2049, doi: 10.1111/hsc.13015. Epub 2020 May 4.*

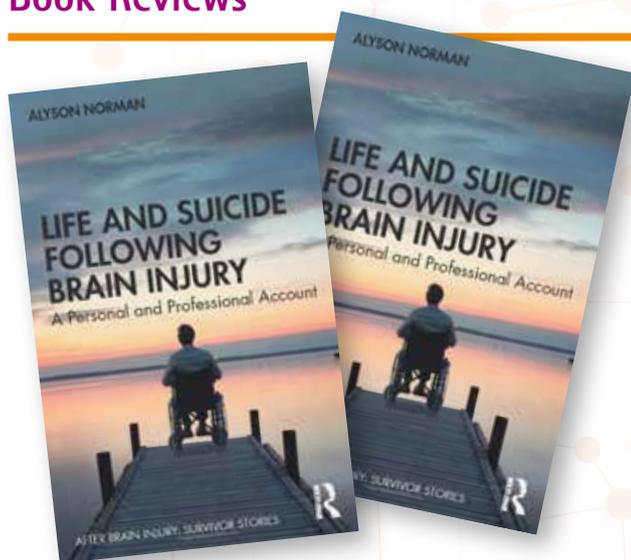
This is an open access article for staff working in health and social care, and also for individuals and families affected by brain injury. The study, using a mixed method questionnaire, showed that health and social care professionals across a range of services in the UK could benefit from ABI-specific training to improve their knowledge, and improve the service currently being provided to individuals with ABI and their families. Participants included UK health and social care professionals, ABI specialists, ABI survivors and family members. The lack of knowledge and understanding of ABI ranged the acute care setting to long-term community services. Poor knowledge was associated with a lack of understanding of the 'hidden' disabilities associated with ABI, a lack of empathy and a lack of awareness regarding safeguarding.



Join your BISWG regional group

BISWG has regional groups in the North West, South West and London. Email info@biswg.co.uk for details. If there isn't a group near you, see if the UK Acquired Brain Injury Forum (UKABIF) has a local group <https://ukabif.org.uk/page/RegionalGroups>

Book Reviews

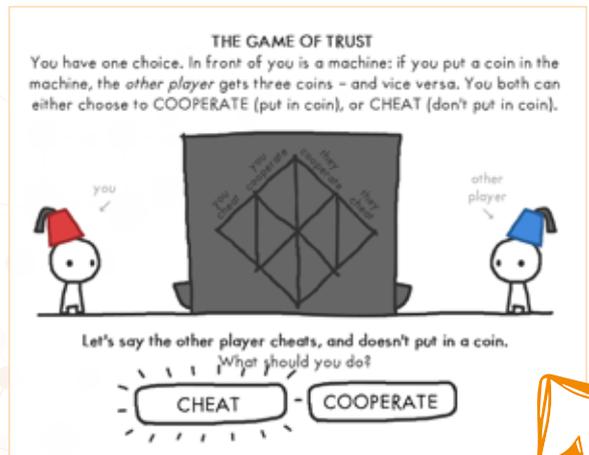


***LIFE AND SUICIDE FOLLOWING BRAIN INJURY:
A Personal And Professional Account
by Dr Alyson Norman, publisher Routledge,
part of the After Brain Injury: Survivor Stories
Reviewed by Dr Mark Holloway***

'Life and suicide following brain injury' is a very personal account of the death by suicide of Dr Alyson Norman's brother Tom. The book provides an excellent opportunity for social workers to learn, build and shape practice.

Tom suffered a series of mild brain injuries in childhood and a severe one in early adulthood. What followed for Tom and his family was a rollercoaster of chaotic behaviour, risk, drug use and, eventually and as predicted, suicide. In the 20 years from severe brain injury to suicide, Tom encountered a myriad of health and social care services, and his family report a perpetual sense of being pushed from pillar to post. The Serious Case Review that followed his death was damning about the lack of brain injury knowledge held by the health and social care staff involved in Tom's life.

Alyson has taken the 20 years of chaos and acknowledged the failings by services. She has used her family experience and turned a forensic eye on what happened and why, relating her experience to research. Co-authors, professionals and specialists in the field were invited to comment on her family's difficult narrative. This is a brave approach but it enables Tom's story to be examined in detail and gives time for reflection on practice.



***'THE EVOLUTION OF TRUST' –
online game
Reviewed by Dr Andy Mantell***

This short, half-hour, free-to-play, online game uses game theory to explore the development of trust in relationships. Developed by the educator and game designer Nicky Case, the game re-affirms the importance of the basics of social work – good communication, forgiveness, relationship building and trust.

The game shows how the level of repeat interactions impacts on the investment given to a relationship and the trust that is likely to develop. This reinforces how important it is for people to have named social workers with whom they can build trust. It also highlights the need for consistency and continuity in inter-professional teams for individuals to achieve their full potential.

Good communication is essential; it builds trust and that facilitates relationships to endure. This can create more effective and efficient inter-professional working. An essential aspect of that relationship is forgiveness for errors – some mistakes are unacceptable and none are desirable, but mistakes do happen and it is essential to learn from them. <https://ncase.me/trust/>

BISWG

The Brain Injury Social Work Group
PO Box 65 Wadebridge, PL27 9BU
info@biswg.co.uk
07501483989

Brain Injury Social Work Group Ltd | Registered Charity Number 1135891
Registered in England and Wales as a company Number 7095017 Registered office:
DB Accountants, The Gables, Yonder Meadow, Stoke Gabriel, Totnes, TQ9 6QE.

Latest resources
and research information
visit www.biswg.co.uk