



Andy McDonald MP
House of Commons
London
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Email: info@andymcdonaldmp.org

Date: 27th April 2020

Dear Andy

I write to you on behalf of Headway Teesside, an independent charity affiliated with “Headway - The Brain Injury Association”. We work with individuals in the Teesside area who have been affected by Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). We support a number of ABI survivors living in your constituency, and there are many more who have not yet found us, but who are living with a brain injury that affects them on a daily basis.

According to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Acquired Brain Injury (APPG on ABI) report ‘Time for Change: Acquired Brain Injury and Neurorehabilitation’ (2018), there are 1.3 million people living with traumatic brain injury related disabilities in the UK, and there are on average 956 acquired brain injury related hospital admissions per day. Indeed, between 2016-2017, there were over 16,000 brain injury related hospital admissions in the North East of England alone according to statistics gathered by Headway UK.

The coronavirus epidemic has prompted the government to introduce measures which enable people deemed to be “clinically extremely vulnerable” to coronavirus (according to a prescribed list of conditions) to access extra support to obtain essentials, including groceries and medicine. Headway Teesside is broadly in support of the measures introduced. However, we would like to express our significant concerns regarding the apparent lack of consideration being given to those with hidden disabilities, such as cognitive and psychological difficulties resulting from a brain injury. These issues can in effect preclude brain injury survivors from accessing essential supplies in the community.

We know that the current public health crisis is an anxious time for everyone, but for those with an ABI, such feelings of anxiety are often amplified and compounded by complex difficulties caused by the brain injury. These can include poor information processing, planning, memory and organisation. According to our members, such feelings of acute anxiety can cause them to dread having to go into the community to access supplies, particularly as they perceive other members of the public do not take social distancing measures seriously. This anxiety can lead to significant periods of distress and even discourage those individuals from going out at all. One of our members explained to me that he experienced a severe headache for three consecutive days after going to his local supermarket, which he attributes to the stress and anxiety this experience caused. He is reluctant to do this again.

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We believe that those with an ABI should be given the opportunity to register as extremely vulnerable individuals, not for medical reasons, but due to their social and psychological vulnerabilities caused by their brain injury.

Having the ability to access:

1. protected grocery delivery slots with supermarkets, and
2. support with prescription medication delivery

would take a great deal of strain from vulnerable individuals in your constituency, and would help to protect public services from having to deal with additional cases of self-neglect, which could ultimately lead to extra hospital admissions. Such measures will ensure that those who are at risk of significant psychological distress as a result of their brain injury feel supported by our society and are given the opportunity to help themselves.

As MP for Middlesbrough, I appeal to you to represent those members of your constituency living with an ABI, who do not have the means nor the confidence to contact you themselves, and call for the criteria to register as an “extremely vulnerable” individual is extended to include those living with an ABI.

A copy of this letter will be made available to the members of Headway Teesside.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your speedy response.

Yours sincerely

Ben Townsend

Director, Headway Teesside

For and on behalf of the members of Headway Teesside



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