

Understanding Acquired Brain Injury: Addressing the knowledge and skills gap in social work education in order to improve practice and outcomes.



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Background

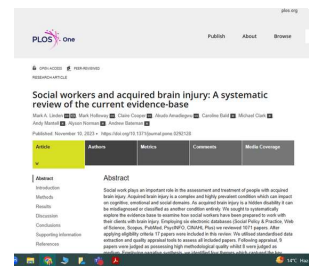
People with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) experience a range of physical and psychological changes that can make it difficult for them to return to pre-injury roles and daily life. For people with ABI and their families to receive access to appropriate social care support, social workers (SW's) must recognise these difficulties and be able to work with service users to meet their needs.

Aims

The Heads Together project aimed to understand the current level of ABI knowledge and practice training for SWs, and to develop a learning platform to improve SW practice when working with people with ABI and their families.

Phase 01 Systematic Scoping Review

The review aimed to understand the current evidence base relating to ABI with SW research. Following narrative synthesis of 17 included publications, four themes were described: 1. 'Advocacy and Social Work'; 2. 'Training and multidisciplinary team working'; 3. 'Inclusion of Social Networks'; and 4. 'Societal Barriers'. Overall it was concluded that there was limited research being conducted that focused on ABI and social work.

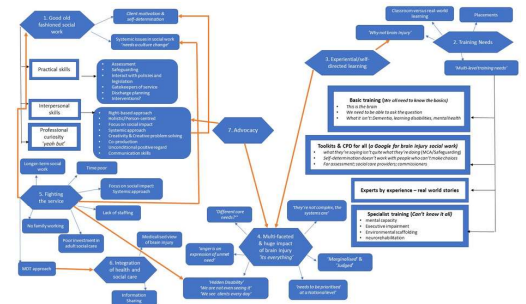


Phase 02 Survey of SW ABI Training and Education

This survey for UK educators regarding the current place of ABI in pre-registration undergraduate and postgraduate course content. The study recruited 36 Social Work Educators. Key topics for suggested inclusion in mandatory training included 1) ABI and mental capacity, 2) ABI and the link with mental illness; and 3) Risks associated with increased suicidality, self-harm, and substance overuse. The findings from this study identified a lack of current brain injury training within social work pre-qualification training.

Phase 03 Interviews with SWs

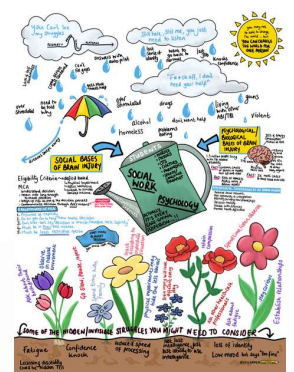
To gain a detailed understanding of knowledge-practice gaps in SW, the team completed semi-structured interviews with 1) SWs who had completed the Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) within the last two years; 2) Service Directors and Training Managers; and 3) Specialist ABI social workers. Analysis identified seven themes, with associated sub-themes (see Figure 1): 1) good old fashioned social work, 2) training needs, 3) experiential/self-directed learning, 4) multifaceted & huge impact of brain injury, 5) fighting the service, 6) integration of health and social care and 7) advocacy.



Phase 04 Making Headway



The team delivered a series of interprofessional training workshops across four University settings to train health and social care professionals in how to support individuals with ABI and their families. At some locations, the Headway Essex play 'Making Headway; was implemented as part of the training package. Feedback from students highlighted improved learning about ABI and how to work across disciplines to support individuals are their families. Students with personal experience of ABI reported feeling seen because ABI also occurs among professionals, including SWs.



Phase 05 Heads Together: Brain Injury Social Work Education Platform (BISWEP)

The team have developed a prototype version of the SWEP for SWs and practice educators. This will be built on in follow-up funding. Current modules include; 1) an overview of ABI; 2) how basic legislation applies to people with ABI; 3) Resource pack; 4) Resources for Practice Educators; 5) modules for individuals with ABI and their families.

