

Headway Swindon



the brain injury association

HEADWAY SWINDON

winter
Newsletter
2026

WELCOME TO OUR WINTER NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM CHIEF OFFICER - SONIA!



As we welcome the start of a new year, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has been an incredibly positive and meaningful end to 2025 for all of us at Headway Swindon. This past year has shown the strength of our community, the dedication of our team, and the resilience of our clients. Together, we have continued to grow, thrive, and support one another in ways that embody the very best of what Headway stands for.

As winter approached, the centre was full of festive spirit. We enjoyed a wonderful lead-up to Christmas, with parties, music, and gatherings bringing warmth and laughter to the centre. Once again, our friends at Dunelm supported us with their "Delivering Joy at Christmas" initiative, enabling members of the public to donate gifts for our clients. This generosity made an enormous difference and ensured that every client received a thoughtful present something that brought smiles and a feeling of being truly valued.

Our clients also took part in the Zurich Challenge, enjoying a fantastic bowling event thanks to the continued support of Zurich volunteers. Their enthusiasm, encouragement, and teamwork made the day unforgettable for everyone involved.

Within the centre, we have continued to build on our work using the Hero's Journey framework supporting clients to explore their challenges, strengths, and personal growth. This approach has deepened our therapeutic work and helped clients recognise just how far they have come, and just how much potential lies ahead.

As we step forward into the New Year, I feel immensely proud of everything we have achieved together. Headway Swindon is more than a service it is a community, a place of belonging, and a source of hope. I look forward to everything the coming year will bring as we continue our mission, nurture our partnerships, celebrate our successes, and support one another every step of the way.

Wishing you all a warm, positive, and inspiring start to the year. We look forward to 2026 together at Headway Swindon

CLIENT STORY



This is Julie and here is her story

On the morning of 7th August 2024, I woke feeling unwell. All day, I felt that something was wrong. After my daughter finished school, I asked her to call my mum. Soon after, an ambulance arrived, and I walked to it, fully aware of my surroundings.

Once at the hospital, things began to change. I started losing my speech gradually. I was talking to my daughter, and then everything suddenly went pear-shaped. I never got my voice back. From February to November, I was mostly bed-bound. I spent 12 weeks in GWH before returning home with carers to help me manage.

In November, I went back to the hospital with a UTI. Because of where I lived, I was airlifted over my neighbour's balcony – though I don't recall this myself; a friend told me about it.

Following that, I was admitted to BIRU in Bristol, where I spent Christmas 2024 through April 2025 relearning to walk. Doctors believe I have something called white matter disease, which likely caused my speech loss the first time. They also think I had a stroke, possibly related to the stress and grief of my dad passing in 2020.

Today, I walk with a walking aid, and my journey has been shaped with grief and resilience – my mum passed away in August 2025. I couldn't cry at the time because I was on antidepressants.

During this time, Lou and Caroline from Headway visited me at home to see if I would like to attend. I decided to come, and I'm so glad I did. I enjoy being part of Headway and have made new friends, finding support, laughter, and connection along the way.

HERO'S JOURNEY UPDATE

A transformative approach to Brain Injury Rehabilitation

Over the past few months, our clients have continued their progress through the Hero's Journey programme, exploring how the brain works, how it adapts, and how new skills are learned after brain injury.

In Section 5 – The Custard Theory. We looked at how the brain is shaped like a walnut and has a consistency similar to a solid piece of cold custard. This analogy helped everyone understand how easily the brain can be squashed or damaged during rapid acceleration or deceleration. We also completed the Awareness Skills Questionnaire and learned about adjustment, exploring how understanding these changes supports recovery.

We then moved on to The Engine Analogy, describing how the brain functions like a car engine. By piecing together the different parts, just like components of an engine, we explored how coordination and control come together to help the brain operate as a whole.

Section 7 – Cells That Fire Together, Wire Together. We looked at how the brain strengthens neural pathways through practice. We discussed how skills may feel awkward at first and how mistakes or even falls can happen, but with repetition, movements become smoother, more coordinated, and more automatic. This reinforced a key message: the more a skill is practised, the stronger and faster the neural pathway becomes.

Section 8 – The Caveman Principle. We explored how the brain frees up capacity for survival by moving new skills from conscious effort to automatic behaviour. This helped our clients understand why learning new skills after a brain injury often requires slowing down, practising repeatedly, and allowing the brain time to adapt.

The Hero's Journey programme continues to support our clients in understanding their recovery, learning how the brain works, building confidence, and celebrating each step forward.



South West CEO Training Meeting

We were delighted to host the South West CEO training meeting on 18th November, welcoming several Headway groups from across the region to our centre. It was a valuable opportunity to share updates, discuss challenges, and strengthen collaboration between services.

Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to such a productive day.

We are already looking forward to the next meeting, which is planned for March.





A big thank you to Hibba for involving us in the Dunelm's Delivering Joy at Christmas campaign, we received lots of wonderful gifts for our clients to enjoy over the festive season.

The generosity shown made a real difference, bringing smiles and comfort at a time when it was needed most.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed – your kindness was truly appreciated.



Community Engagement

We would like to give a big thank you to Gordon for giving up his time last month to help promote Headway Swindon at Tesco Extra and for all his hard work selling tickets for our Christmas hamper raffle.

Overall, our hamper raffle raised:

£129



A huge thank you as well to Heidi, (Tesco Community Champion) for giving us this wonderful opportunity. We truly appreciate your support and look forward to working with you more throughout the year.

And of course, a heartfelt thank you to everyone who purchased tickets—your support means so much and helps us continue our work.



Zurich Challenge Bowling Day

Our clients had an amazing time taking part in the Zurich Challenge, enjoying a fantastic bowling event that was full of fun, laughter, and teamwork.

From the very first frame, it was clear that the day was about more than just bowling. Our clients showed incredible teamwork, cheering each other on, celebrating strikes and spares, and supporting one another throughout the games. The positive energy was infectious, and it was wonderful to see everyone enjoying themselves so fully.

A huge thank you goes to the Zurich volunteers for dedicating their time and energy to make the event a success. Their guidance, encouragement, and friendly support ensured that everyone had the opportunity to shine, build confidence, and create lasting memories.





Festive Fun



Christmas Party Week

2025's Christmas party week was a fantastic way to celebrate the season with our clients! From bingo and a festive quiz, to sing-alongs, Christmas films, and plenty of delicious seasonal treats, there was something for everyone to enjoy. Laughter, fun, and community spirit filled every session, making it a truly memorable week.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make the week so special:

Karen for leading a wonderful festive arts & crafts session, sparking creativity and festive cheer.

Jill at Uptown Yoga for providing a calming and restorative sound bath therapy session – the perfect way to unwind during the busy season.

Heidi at Tesco Ocotal Way for supplying nibbles, mince pies, and drinks, keeping everyone well-fuelled for the week's activities.

The week was a heart warming reminder of the joy that comes from spending time together and celebrating as a community.

It was a wonderfully festive way to close out the year, and we're so grateful to everyone who joined in the fun and helped create such special memories

We look forward to carrying this festive spirit into the New Year and can't wait to see what 2026 has in store!



Headway Hospital Liaison Service update

As part of our new liaison service, Sarah has been engaging with patients and staff across multiple wards at GWH.

★ Forest Ward: Supported gym and sensory sessions with patients, focusing on a variety of sensations, textures, and activities to aid recovery.

★ Trauma Ward: Met with ward staff to discuss ways to provide ongoing support and strengthen connections.

★ Physiotherapy – Neuro: Continued follow-ups with patients to support their rehabilitation and engagement.

Through these activities, the liaison service is helping to foster stronger connections across the hospital and ensure patients receive continued care and support.

A special visit from the Mayor of Swindon

We were delighted to welcome the Mayor of Swindon to Headway.

During the visit, the Mayor had the opportunity to meet our clients, hear their stories, and see first hand the variety of activities we offer—from cooking, art, and gardening, to puzzles, mindfulness, and social sessions. It was wonderful to share the positive impact of our work and the sense of community and support that our clients value so highly.

A huge thank you to the Mayor for taking the time to visit and to our staff, volunteers, students and clients for making it such a special day.



Exciting new partnership with Zurich Community Trust

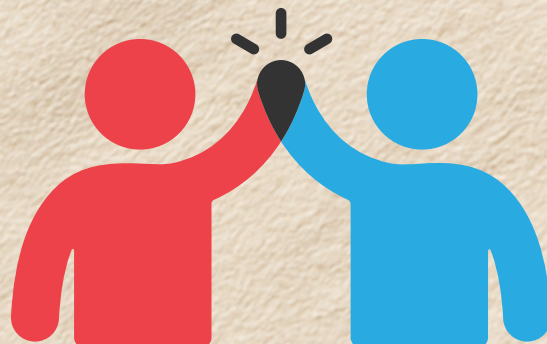
We are thrilled to share that Zurich Community Trust has chosen us as a new charity partner!

As part of their Swindon initiative, Zurich has committed £20,000 annually for the next three years to support our work. This funding will help us launch an Integrated Health Promotion Programme for adults with acquired and traumatic brain injuries.

The programme will deliver evidence-based support to improve our clients physical and mental wellbeing, social connections, and ability to manage long-term conditions.

Alongside funding, Zurich UK employees will also continue to provide volunteering support, strengthening this exciting partnership and helping us make a real difference in the community.

We are incredibly grateful to Zurich Community Trust and their employees and can't wait to see the impact this programme will have over the next three years!



PRIORITY SERVICES REGISTER - EXTRA SUPPORT FROM UTILITIES

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is free to join and helps utility companies (electricity, gas, and water) support customers who need extra help with everyday energy matters or in the event of a power cut, gas, or water supply interruption.

Who can join:

- People using medical equipment reliant on electricity or water
- Households with children under five
- People who are blind, partially sighted, deaf, or hard of hearing
- Those with chronic illnesses, disabilities, or mental health conditions
- People of pensionable age or temporarily needing extra support
- Anyone needing documents in another format or language

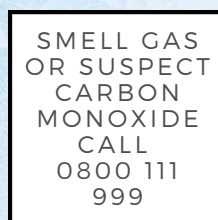
Support you can get:

- Advance notice of outages or supply interruptions
- Assistance with meters and bills
- Accessible formats for documents
- Password scheme for visiting engineers

How to register:

If you know your energy company, you can sign up directly via their Priority Services page.

If unsure, enter your postcode at **www.thepsr.co.uk** to be directed to the correct electricity and gas company.



Brain Injury Factsheets

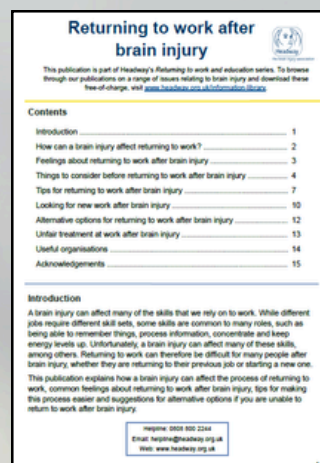
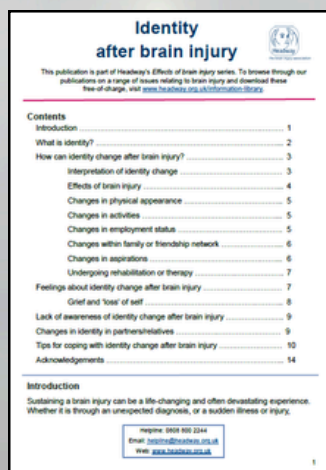
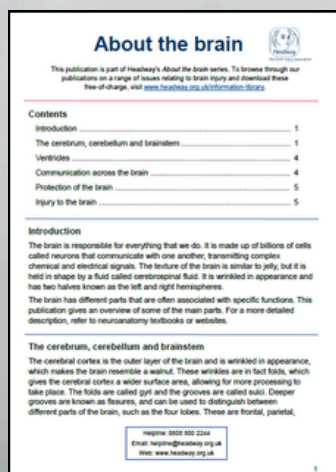
Access Our Brain Injury Factsheets

Our range of factsheets and booklets are designed for people with brain injuries and their families, covering topics such as:

- About brain injury
- Effects of brain injury
- Employment and education
- Family issues and relationships
- Legal issues
- Practical issues
- Welfare benefits
- Translated information

You can pick up free printed copies from our centre in Dorcan or PDF's are available to download at:

www.headway.org.uk under About a Brain Injury → Individuals → Information Library.



WINTER WARMER RECIPE

Creamy Carrot and Potato Soup



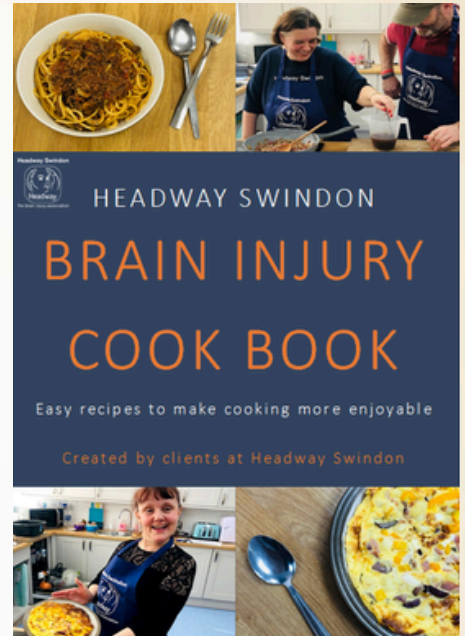
Servings: 4

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

	5 Carrots (Chopped)	
	2 Medium Potatoes (Chopped)	
	1 Onion (Chopped)	
	1 Litre Vegetable Stock	
	2-3 Tablespoons cream, milk or dairy-free alternative	



Love cooking?

This simple winter recipe is a great way to warm up and try something tasty this January.

For more step-by-step recipes, tips, and hints to make cooking easier after a brain injury, check out our Headway Brain Injury Cookbook.

Creamy Carrot and Potato Soup

What to do

1.	Put all the chopped vegetables in a pan	
2.	Pour in the 1 litre of vegetable stock	
3.	Bring to a boil, then reduce to a low heat	
4.	Simmer for 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft	
5.	Mash with a potato masher or blend for a smooth soup	
6.	Stir in the cream or milk, then serve warm	



Headway Hint:

Use pre chopped or frozen vegetables

Copies are available for £25

BRAIN TRAINING



HEADWAY SWINDON WINTER

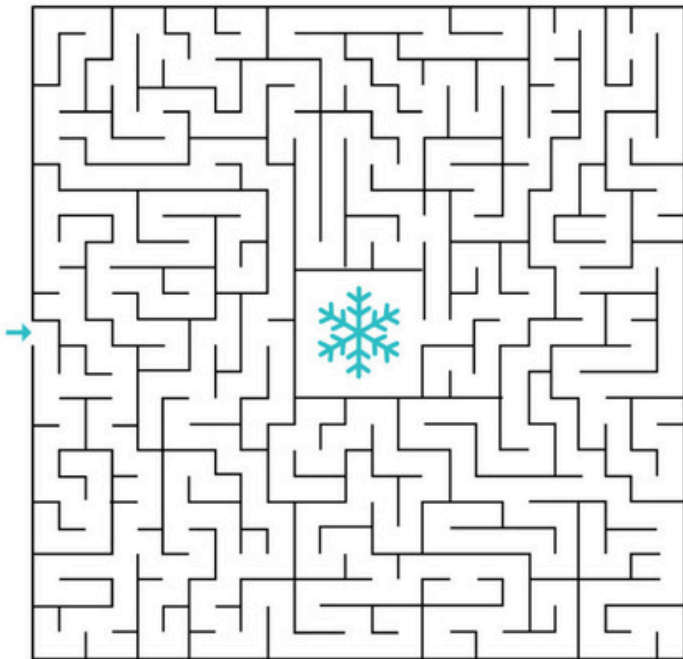
WORDSEARCH

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BLANKET BOOTS COAT COLD COZY FIREPLACE FROST ICE
JANUARY SCARF SKATING SNOWFLAKE SOCKS WIND WINTER

WINTER MAZE

Find your way through the maze to reach the snowflake in the center.



Sudoku Game

Fill each box with a number between 1 and 9 in a manner that the same number does not appear twice in any specific row or column.



	2		6			4	3	5
6				3			7	
1	3	4		7	5			
9	4			8			6	3
			4		2	9		7
			9	6	3			2
4					8	7		
	8			9			2	
		3		4				

EXPLORE OUR NEW DONATION OPTIONS

If you are interested in supporting our work, there are various ways you can make a donation:



JustGiving™

If you're taking on a challenge or holding your own event, the QR code will take you straight to our main donation page.



amazon wishlist

Check out our Amazon wish list! Every item you buy helps us reach our goals



easyfundraising

Easy Fundraiser partners with over 7,500 brands who will donate part of what you spend. It won't cost you any extra. The cost is covered by the Brand

Cheque:
You can make any donations by cheque. If you are posting your cheque please enclose your contact details (e.g. address) so that we can thank you.

Recycle Charity

Donate your used Ink Cartridges and together we can help reduce landfill and raise money at the same time!



Tickets for the lottery cost just £1 a week. Each ticket has a 1 in 50 chance to win a prize each week, with a top prize of £25,000!



Raise money when you shop online at no extra cost to you! Simply sign up for an account and start shopping to make a difference!



CAF Pay As You Earn

This is the UK's number one Payroll Giving scheme for employers.



For more information please go to:

<http://headwayswindon.org.uk/support-us/donate/>

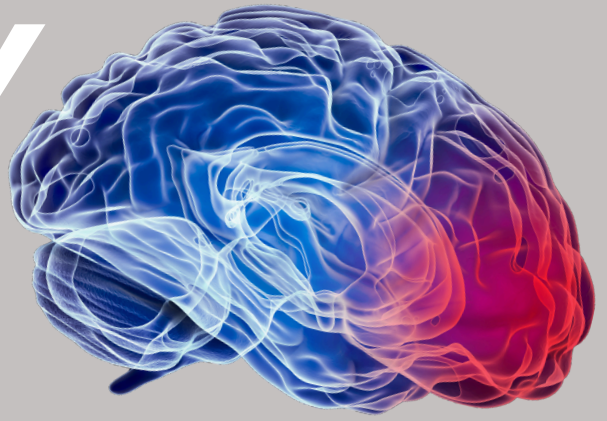


THANK
.. YOU
😊

Headway extends its gratitude to our donators for their generous contributions and unwavering support; your help means a lot to us, and we are truly thankful.

-  Chaps Tratos Cavi UK Ltd
-  John Kennedy
-  Zurich Community Trust
-  Peter Swinyard
-  Tesco Ocotal Way

HEADWAY SWINDON



THE BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION

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Headway Swindon



Registered with
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the brain injury association

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