

**Poster presentation at International Brain Injury Association Conference,
Dublin**

Specialist acquired brain injury UK social workers' experience of their professional education, and views upon training and education needs of SW's who work with individuals affected by ABI.

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Review by Aly Norman, Deputy Chair of Anchor Point

UK Social workers encounter individuals and families affected by ABI in the course of their work. Social Worker's play a significant role in upholding rights and implementing laws relating to mental capacity and safeguarding; and are gatekeepers to potential resources and sources of support. A growing body of evidence has identified difficulties in practice and potential gaps in training which have had significant impact on the lives of people with ABI. The reported study forms part of a wider research project called 'Heads Together' researching Social Work (SW) training and knowledge of ABI to better inform future pre and post qualifying course design and content.

The study aimed to gain a better understanding of brain injury training for UK social workers, where the gaps in knowledge exist and how to integrate training in the future. Nine Brain Injury Specialist Social Workers were interviewed via zoom using a semi-structured interview schedule.

Participants identified that supporting individuals with brain injury involved a broad range of social work skills including creative problem solving as well as having a good understanding of appropriate care packages and the needs of individuals with ABI. All participants identified the need for change in current social work practices in the UK, specifically a need for longer term working and working alongside other professionals to enable social workers to better understand the needs of those with ABI and their families. Participants noted that brain injury impacts on functioning in every area of daily life. Brain injury was seen as a mainly hidden disability that made it difficult to detect without suitable training. None of the participants interviewed had received formal training in brain injury. Instead, they had engaged in self-directed

learning when presented with cases of brain injury in their practice. Finally, participants expressed the need for brain injury training that includes basic training during pre-qualification, intermediate training as part of early professional development and then in-depth training for those working in specialist areas.