BRAIN
INJURY
MATTERS

IMPACT REPORT 2021-2022

BRAIN INJURY MATTERS

Supporting, Promoting and Empowering all those affected by Acquired Brain Injury

#livingbeyondABI

braininjurymatters.org.uk

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CHAIRPERSON'S OVERVIEW

Our work and provision of services this year must be set against the background of the continuing Covid 19 pandemic and the transition to a recovery phase.

In 2021/22, we continued to offer services remotely through Zoom, telephone or our dedicated online portal whilst beginning to reintroduce face-to-face service.

Through our Family First Service, we support children with ABI and their wider families and this was critical in supporting children returning to school after lockdown. A key and unexpected highlight of the year was the launch of the Rua picturebook in partnership with the Education Authority which ensured the sharing of a unique children's publication with every primary school in Northern Ireland.

The Youth Matters Empowerment Programme (13-18 years) supports young people and families to understand ABI and its impact. Stemming from this programme, we officially launched the peer mentoring programme in November 2021, developed in partnership with the Southern Heath and Social Care Trust.

Our Arts, Sports and Wellbeing service provides long-term community support and rehabilitation for adults living with an ABI in the community and continues to go from strength to strength. Our participants have showcased their talent in arts exhibitions and local festivals and the Pedal Power programme continues to evolve. Pedal Power's value was summed up beautifully by our Head of Adult Services Jonathan McCrea during a BBC interview when he said "They leave their walking frames behind and they're free".

Claire Sullivan, Chairperson, Brain Injury Matters

Central to our delivery is the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our services and it is encouraging to report that 100% of participants would recommend the Brain Injury Matters Wellbeing Service to someone else living with an ABI.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and work of our staff team, the Board and our families and volunteers who enable us to deliver our services. This gratitude is also extended to our funders who have worked with us as we adapted our service delivery to the changing environment as we emerged from the pandemic. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of our corporate donors The Greenview Group.

As we now face into another challenge, the cost-of-living crisis, we believe that the work we have undertaken over the past few years to strengthen our organisation will stand us in good stead, as we continue to work collectively to deliver our services and maintain our support for those individuals and families living with acquired brain injury.

Claire Sullivan,
Chairperson, Brain Injury Matters

CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES 2021/22

Brain Injury Matters' Children and Youth Service (CYS) supports children and young people and their families with ABI through the Family First (0-12yrs) and Youth Empowerment (13-18yrs) programmes.

The Children & Youth Service has 4 main elements: family based support; social activities/peer support; online support via our Portal; and the mentoring programme.

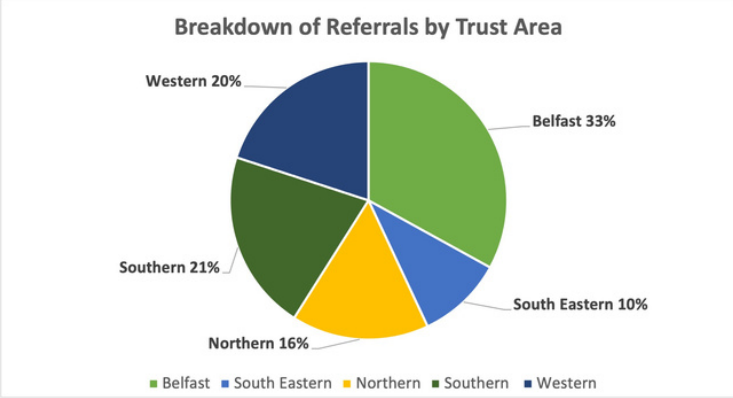
PERFORMANCE SCORECARD

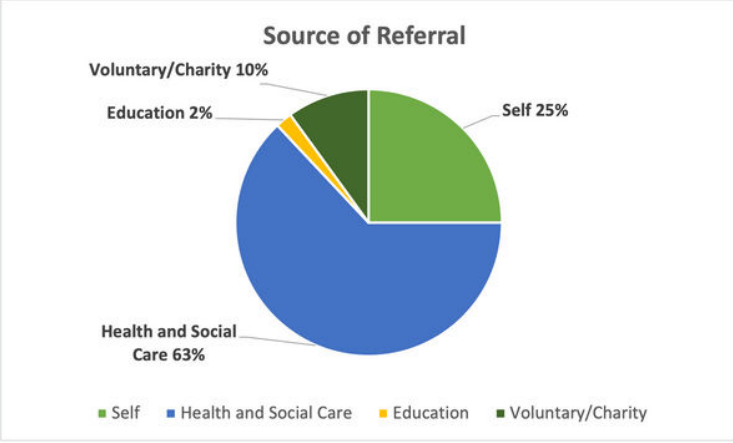
The performance scorecard captures the outcomes and impact of our work in 4 areas: **Accessibility; Acceptability; Effectiveness and Engagement; and Working in Partnership.**

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES

During 2021-2022 a total of 199 people accessed our services.

- **28 families** accessed our **Family First Service**: 28 children, 44 parents/carers and 26 siblings = **98**
- **23 families** accessed our **Youth Empowerment Service**: 23 young people, 36 parents/carers and 42 siblings = **101.**

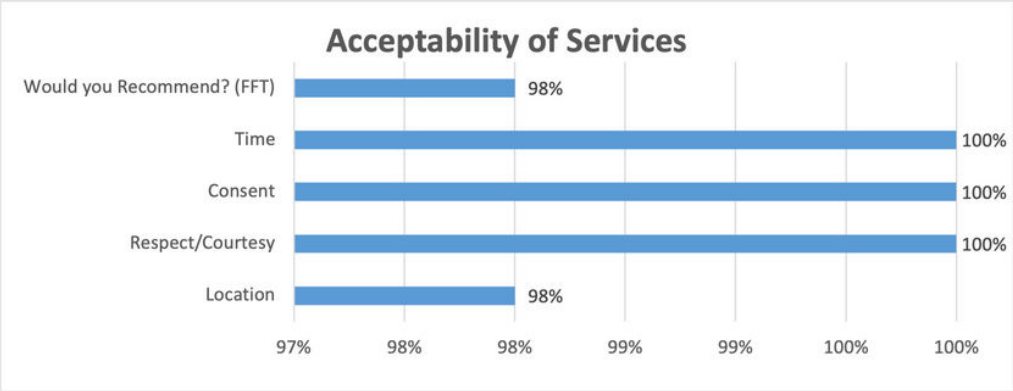




328 HOURS

TIME SPENT BY **FAMILY FIRST** DIRECTLY ENGAGING WITH **FAMILIES**

ACCEPTABILITY OF SERVICES



98%

Of clients and their families would recommend Brain Injury Matters' services to family and friends

EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICES

For our 2021/22 CYS evaluation, we collated information qualitatively from our families for a thematic analysis. By conducting focus groups and interviews, we were able to get more detailed feedback and subject this to formal qualitative analysis methodology.

The evaluation found that parents experienced **"nothing else like this"** in Northern Ireland. Recurring themes were (a) how the accessibility and flexibility of the service facilitated engagement (b) that interventions helped empower parents to better support their child's needs and (c) that the whole family's involvement in interventions was appreciated.

The table below summarises the findings of the analysis.

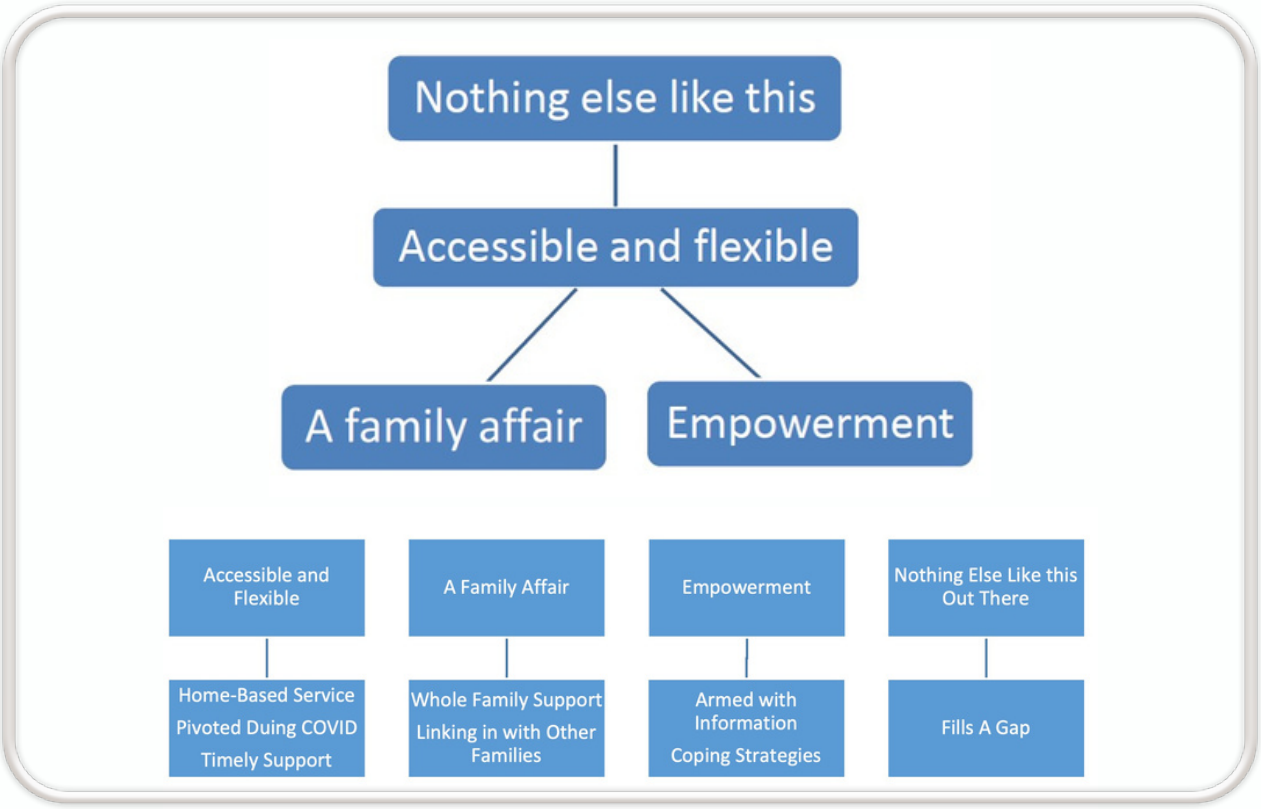


Figure: Thematic synthesis of Children & Youth Service Qualitative Evaluation

OVERVIEW OF ADULT SERVICES 2021/22

Brain Injury Matters' Adult Service provides long-term community support and rehabilitation to support people to come to terms with the problems and deficits resulting from the ABI, rebuild a meaningful life and create a renewed sense of achievement and purpose.

Our adult services include:

- **Arts (Space) and Wellbeing service** – offering long-term rehabilitation and support through a holistic programme including: creative arts; physical activity & sports; leisure; and self-care/management.
- **Sports (hub) service** – including Pedal Power, an adapted cycling programme partnered with Sustrans.
- **Counselling Service** – delivering a telephone and video counselling service.

Service delivery adheres to the relevant recommendations of the Royal College of Physicians Guidelines on Stroke; the Royal College of Physicians Guidelines for ABI; the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the HSC NI's 'Brain Injury: Service Standards and Quality Indicators'.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES

Arts (Space) and Wellbeing service
Participants had access to 11 different activities during '21/'22, approximately 288 sessions and over the year there were 1435 attendances, an average of 30 per week.

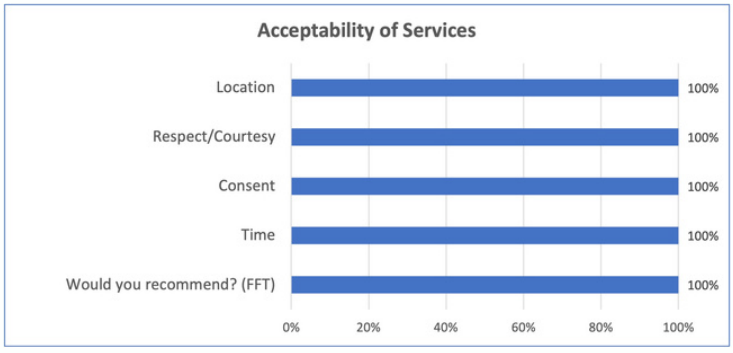
Sports (hub) service
Participants had access to 19 sessions between October 2021 and March 2022. There were 88 attendances, an average of 5 per week.

Counselling Service
There were 176 counselling sessions offered to people with ABI and their families.

Of 39 referrals, 20 (51%) were directly from Health and Social Care Practitioners within the NHS, with a further 12 (31%) originating from other voluntary sector organisations.

Of these referrals, 29 (74%) were for people with ABI, while the remaining 10 (26%) were a family member.

ACCEPTABILITY OF SERVICES



100%

of participants would recommend Brain Injury Matters' services to family and friends

EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICES

100% of Wellbeing participants reported that:

- **being with others allowed them to be social, make friends and participate with others.**
- **meeting others with an ABI helped their mood and wellbeing.**
- **meeting others with an ABI helped them understand and adjust to life after ABI.**
- **having their creative work displayed at exhibitions and festivals helped their confidence and self-esteem.**
- **by attending the Wellbeing Service they discovered new interests and skills.**
- **attending the Wellbeing Service enhanced their independence.**
- **the Wellbeing Service offered them long term support as they lived life beyond ABI.**

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

In 21/22, The BIM (NI) Staff Team proactively engaged in local and regional partnerships to raise awareness of ABI and support the sharing of information and services to the general public and family and friends.

The staff team have also actively engaged with the HSCB, Health Trusts, the Community Brain Injury Teams, Belfast HSCT Physical Disability Team, the Community Stroke Teams and Stroke Units to raise awareness of the services available and to ensure BIM services are known and accessible to those living with ABI and their families.

Similarly, the team worked closely with: Headway; The Cedar Foundation; The Brain Injury Foundation; Children's Brain Injury Trust; The Stroke Association; Action Mental Health; Belfast Exposed; Groundwork; Wheelworks; Eastside Arts; the Nerve Centre; the Ulster Museum; Disability Sport NI; Leonard Cheshire's ARBI; Drake Music; Sustrans NI; Arts Care; University of Atypical; Una McCann Music; Ormeau Community Choir; Arts for All; Northern Ireland Mental Health Arts Festival; and Eastside Arts Festival.

HIGHLIGHTS 21/22

Although our normal range of events and face-to-face activities were somewhat curtailed in 2020/21 due to the ongoing pandemic, it was, as ever, a busy and productive year, with many events happening virtually. The below represents just a small sample of the exhibitions, fundraising activities, media coverage and initiatives that our service users, families, staff and volunteers took part in!

Eastside Arts Festival

East Belfast | August '21

This vibrant community festival gave some our Arts & Wellbeing participants the chance to showcase creative work produced during lockdown.

Short Stories, a collection of nine very different tales emerged from creative writing workshops with the writer Shannon Yee. The stories were recorded and read by actors and were intended to provide a momentary escape from the reality of our collective experiencing of the pandemic into creative worlds where the imagination could roam freely.

In the dance piece *Waiting,* our artists explored how they move and explore the world they are in, and how they stay connected to the outside world. The piece was created in virtual workshops with the dancer Helen Hall.

Unexpected Happenings

Flax Gallery | Theatre at the Mill, Newtownabbey | January '22

An exhibition of drawings, paintings, mixed media and photography created during the pandemic through weekly Zoom workshops.

The pandemic contributed to our participants' feelings of isolation and disconnection but these sessions offered a valuable chance to reconnect and share experiences with each other and through their art.

Each week, new and unexpected talents were uncovered and the participants were delighted to exhibit a selection of their work at the Flax Gallery.

NI Mental Health Arts Festival

May '21

NIMHAF is a festival that provides a platform for high-quality artwork that deals compassionately and intelligently with mental health.

Four Brain Injury Matters arts projects were showcased. *Looking Through Our Eyes*, a photography exhibition emerging from a series of projects between Belfast Exposed and Brain Injury Matters, gave those with lived experience of brain injury, and sometimes associated mental health issues, the chance to help wider audiences understand some of the issues faced by people living with a brain injury. *Let your Imagination Flow*, an animation created by our participants, staff and families with Can Do Academy, Una McCann Music and members of the Ormeau Community Choir, playfully explored the theme of spring as a time of renewal, rejuvenation and change.

In the creative writing piece *Loneliness*, Kieran Stewart sensitively explored loneliness, and in the *Expressions of Life* podcast, participants discussed how they have reconnected with their interests and passions post-brain injury, and explored the importance of artistic discovery and practice.

A Cool New Era for Pedal Power

March '22

Our Pedal Power Project has entered a new era with the arrival of our first ICE-Trike. The ICE-Trike makes balance easier and enables our service users to cycle independently along our greenways.

Thank you to Tesco Bags of Help and Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland for funding our first Ice Trike.

BBC NI were on hand to capture our participants first experiences on the trikes and you can view the short film at youtube.com/watch?v=2PMagqKUlW0.

The Greenview Group have now purchased an additional ICE Trike for us, significantly increasing the number of participants that can take part in Pedal Power.

Pedal Power, in partnership with Sustrans NI, helps brain injury survivors re-discover their love of cycling and the great outdoors. The project provides participants with physical, emotional and psychological benefits.

Roisin Joins Children In Need's Surprise Squad!

November '21

A member of our Youth Matters Steering Group, Roisin Quinn was selected to join Children in Need's Surprise Squad, made up of five inspirational young people who have been supported by BBC Children in Need and want to lend a helping hand to benefit others.

Roisin has been receiving support for her brain injury from Brain Injury Matters. Roisin feels her confidence and capabilities have massively improved since she started with BIM and she was delighted to be able to take part in Children in Need.

She said, “It’s so exciting... I never thought I would be doing something like this. Right now we’re doing a challenge to build a garden - we’re planting things and digging".

“I’m a bit anxious about it airing on TV but I’ll be so proud of myself when it’s on. I think people from Brain Injury Matters will be so proud of me too. They set up a Youth Steering Group and I’m the treasurer of that group."

Rua's Sore Head

December '21

Local Fermanagh woman, Sarah Moon, launched a children’s illustration book for families experiencing the unseen challenges triggered by the impact of an acquired brain injury.

Rua’s Sore Head, developed with a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund, was launched on the 4th December at The MAC, Belfast. The book has since been distributed to schools, librarys and other settings across Northern Ireland.

Sarah has been involved with Brain Injury Matters since 2019 after her son acquired a brain injury some years previously and she wrote *Rua’s Sore Head* using her insights as a parent of a child with an acquired brain injury. The picturebook features illustrations by Jim Lavery.

Our Chairperson, Claire Sullivan said: "Brain Injury Matters is delighted to support the launch of *Rua’s Sore Head* and we are so proud of all those involved in bringing Sarah Moon’s story to life. It is a heart-warming festive story and it raises awareness and highlights that there is life beyond acquired brain injury".

Local Councils Shine a Light on Brain Injury

May '21

During Action for Brain Injury Week (17 – 23 May) Brain Injury Matters partnered with local councils across Northern Ireland to light civic buildings blue and green to put a spotlight on acquired brain injury.

Over the course of the week 17 council buildings and public sites were lit up.

Acquired brain injury has often been referred to as a 'silent epidemic' due to limited public awareness and the more subtle difficulties that can arise with memory and thinking abilities.

The campaign achieved significant local media coverage and helped to raise much-needed awareness of this life-long condition.

Virtual Conference on Childhood ABI

May '21

In partnership with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Brain Injury Matters hosted a virtual conference on childhood ABI, *Developing Services for Children living with ABI: Good Practice, Opportunities and Challenges.*

The conference's opening address was delivered by Health Minister Robin Swann. The event showcased some of the important work happening in the health, education and voluntary sectors.

The conference provided health professionals with key learning in the area of childhood ABI from experts in the field and offered the perspective of lived experience through the voice of families impacted by acquired brain injury.

Thank you Greenview!

Carryduff-headquartered Greenview has chosen Brain Injury Matters as its Charity of the Year for 2022 and have already donated £4,000 for the purchase of an additional ICE-Trike for our Pedal Power initiative!

Throughout the year, Greenview will support us through fundraising and employee initiatives.

Sahara Trek raises £5000!

Our intrepid Sahara trek team made it out of the desert after a gruelling but unforgettable experience. But most importantly, they raised £1000s between them for Brain Injury Matters.

If you'd like to take part in a challenge for Brain Injury Matters, watch this space!

Major Award from Dormant Accounts Fund NI

March '22

Dormant Accounts FUND NI | Delivered by THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

The Dormant Accounts Fund NI, delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund Northern Ireland, will provide £99,500 of funding over the next three years to support our work.

CEO Joe McVey commented:

"For Brain Injury Matters, our Vision 2025 is of a sustainable and resilient organisation delivering successfully for all of our service users. This grant will help us to put in place some of the essential building blocks to deliver on that Vision."

Well-Deserved Recognition for Volunteers

Congratulations to three of our longstanding volunteers, Derek Shannon, Hugh McNally and Brian White who have been awarded a Lord Mayor's Certificate in recognition of their contribution to the city of Belfast.

Hugh was also Highly Commended as Volunteer of Year in the NI Health and Social Care Awards and Eastside Awards.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES

They've helped me, they've helped my young person but they've also helped my whole family.

I think the bedtime routine and morning routines were really helpful in getting her more independent.

I was looking for some guidance going forward as she goes into her GCSE year next. Definitely that's been good. You've done as much as you can in a pandemic year.

We've really struggled with services before because ----- (young person) won't engage. So [we] thought that we wouldn't get much from the service but you've surpassed my expectations. It's been so helpful just to be able to talk"

ADULT SERVICES

I can meet and be with people who are going through the same things.

[The] Wellbeing [service] offers the opportunity to socialise, get out of the house & meet other people with similar experiences of brain injury as themselves…

The only place where I feel I can truly be myself.

The only place I feel normal.

CASE STUDY
CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES

In April 2021, Family First became involved with a 9 year old boy who had sustained an ABI as a result of a viral infection. He was treated in hospital as an acute case but on discharge the family felt they were 'lost without any idea of what to do or how to get support'.

Following some 'google searching', mum made contact with BIM. She reported significant challenges in relation to the child's frustration, poor concentration, memory and behaviour and that 'family life was very difficult'. School work was being done remotely in common with other children during the pandemic and mum reported challenges with this. She felt there had been a change in her child's personality and she felt unable to know how to help and that the whole family was struggling.

Following initial assessment, mum was supported to identify goals which the family, sibling and young boy wanted to work on. All sessions were completed virtually by phone. Mum engaged in psychoeducation and was supported to understand the changes in her son's responses in relation to ABI and techniques and strategies were discussed to identify those appropriate to the needs of the young boy and the family, including the needs of his older sibling. The family were supported with a range of suggested activities to help everyone to process the changes and challenges without pressure. Mum and dad were also encouraged to find time for themselves separately and together to identify ways to recharge.

Through supported discussion, the young boy and his sibling were able to identify and explore their emotions and feelings and relate these to situations which caused possible challenges and work on strategies appropriately alongside parent support. Mum and dad commented on how much they learnt about themselves as parents and about different parenting techniques. Mum reported how she had shared the successes with Family First with other family members and friends and the parents made a donation to Brain Injury Matters following a fundraising event they organized. The family were supported with preparation for return to school following lockdown , which mum and the school reported as having 'gone really well without any hiccups for both boys'.

CASE STUDY
YOUTH MATTERS

Ciaran, a 16 year old male, was referred to the Youth Matters service in October 2021 for support for his school and his mum in advocating for his needs. Ciaran sustained multiple acquired brain injuries related to removal of a brain tumour. Support has taken place primarily with Ciaran's mum and liaison with school.

During assessment his mum reported that due to the vast number of medical practitioners, services and appointments he is involved with that it can be difficult to relay all of the information giving a holistic picture of his difficulties and needs.

Supportive visits and telephone calls have taken place and included assisting mum with the emotional and practical impact of Ciaran's ABI. Supportive conversations have helped mum in coming to terms with the impact of his ABI on the whole family. Examples of practical support included assisting her to use the computer to collate health information related to her son, and with the use of a scanner app to save and upload medical forms so that copies can be sent to relevant professionals. A health template document has been created, which lists all professionals and their contact details, and includes an explanation of Ciaran's multiple diagnoses, and what they mean and the physical, psychological, cognitive and social impact of these diagnoses on his life. Support was also provided to help mum to complete forms. Mum reported: 'I was so stressed over them, I'm not used to filling out forms. Thank you for helping me, it really took a weight off and it made me realise how much I do for him.'

Support with school involved a discussion with Ciaran's classroom assistant to support his understanding of Ciaran's needs and to provide tailored memory & learning strategies. Supportive telephone calls with the SENCO took place and advice and signposting given on accessing school training. Support is ongoing.

TREASURER'S REVIEW 2021/22

Colette Kane, Treasurer,
Brain Injury Matters

The Board of Brain Injury Matters (NI) placed a high emphasis on the financial position of the charity during 2021/22 as the impact of the pandemic continued for much of the year.

As with 2020/21 it was necessary to look at other sources of income and ways to reduce expenditure. Whilst grateful for the additional income provided by government during 2020/21, this year proved challenging for all. It was only with careful decision making and constant monitoring that Brain Injury Matters (NI) sustained its financial position. It is therefore a credit to the CEO and staff team in particular, and to my board colleagues, that such a high level of service continues in such difficult financial circumstances.

As Treasurer, I would like to personally thank the funding bodies who have provided the finance to enable the continuation of such vital services. This Impact Report clearly demonstrates how your funding was used effectively.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Finance and Human Resources Committee, Board members, the CEO and staff team for their diligence in ensuring the continued success of the charity. Finally, I thank PFKFPM for their professionalism in carrying out their role.

Colette Kane,
Treasurer, Brain Injury Matters

Statement of Financial Activities Year Ended March 2022

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total Funds 2022 £
Income and endowments from:			
Donations and legacies	16,113	30,415	46,528
Charitable activities	2,100	422,025	424,125
Other trading activities	18,479	-	18,479
Investments	12	-	12
Total Income and endowments	**36,704**	**452,440**	**489,144**
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities	-32,786	-444,253	-477,039
Raising funds	-	-4,536	-4,536
Total Expenditure	**-32,786**	**-448,789**	**-481,575**
Net income / (expenditure) for the year before transfers	**3,918**	**3,651**	**7,569**
Reconciliation of funds:			
Total funds brought forward	197,965	2,919	200,884
Total Funds Carried Forward	**201,883**	**6,570**	**208,453**

LOOKING FORWARD 2021/22

Joe McVey, CEO,
Brain Injury Matters

The environment in September 2022 is markedly different from that of 12 months ago with a greater sense of hope and optimism as the health impacts of Covid 19 begin to recede.

Nevertheless, the economic, social and societal changes continue to be evident and will continue to impact upon the physical and mental wellbeing of our beneficiaries. In this environment the need for Brain Injury Matters (NI)'s services for children, young people and adults and their families will be even greater in the coming years. As a response, we have initiated an action learning study looking at the role and challenges facing carers supporting family members living with an acquired brain injury and we would hope to develop a programme of support in 22/23. In recognition of the challenges facing family members, we are proposing to expand our counselling service to support family members.

The experience of the past year has encouraged us to consider how we deliver our services and organise ourselves. Feedback from staff and beneficiaries has highlighted the benefits of a blended flexible model of working, utilising technology and telephone support combined with face-to-face support where appropriate. It is likely that this approach will be a more evident feature of work and delivery in the coming year. This hybrid approach has also encouraged us to consider our needs and to reconfigure our office and wellbeing space requirements.

The impact of Covid 19 in the medium to long term, as with many voluntary organisations, will be seen in the area of funding and financial sustainability as Government seeks to recoup the costs and ensure statutory services can be resourced. Consequently, we will need to proactively pursue funding opportunities with the private and with statutory funders.

One of the key themes as we move out of the pandemic is that of organisational resilience and planning for the future. To this end, we are building on the work undertaken in 21/22, as set out in Brain Injury Matters Vison 2025, and have been supported by the Dormant Accounts Fund to take some practical steps to build a more resilient, flexible and confident organisation that continues to focus on the needs of our beneficiaries and delivers on behalf of those individuals and their families living with an acquired brain injury, offering confidence and renewed hope.

Joe McVey,
Chief Executive Officer, Brain Injury Matters

THANK YOU

Brain Injury Matters is grateful for the generous support of our funders and partners.

Belfast City Council

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
caring supporting improving together

HSC Public Health Agency
Project supported by the PHA

PRINCIPAL FUNDER arts council of Northern Ireland
LOTTERY FUNDED arts council of Northern Ireland

Dormant Accounts FUND NI
Delivered by THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

BBC Children in Need

Greenview
Working better together

TESCO Bags of Help

RTÉ TOY SHOW APPEAL
The Community Foundation for Ireland

HSF The Hospital Saturday Fund

Garfield Weston FOUNDATION

BENEFACT GROUP

BELFAST CATHEDRAL
THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. ANNE

Peter Harrison FOUNDATION

The Edward Gostling Foundation

ULSTER GARDEN VILLAGES LIMITED

LFT Charitable Trust

BOOST DRINKS

dwf foundation

BRAIN INJURY MATTERS

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