

Q&As about this FREE, no-obligation legal and welfare service for individuals and families affected by brain injury

What is the Brain Injury Group?

The Brain Injury Group is a national network of dedicated brain injury lawyers and other experts that provides access to services and support for people affected directly or indirectly by brain injury. Our primary aim is to help the individuals and families affected to access professional advice on legal, financial and welfare benefits issues in particular.

What is LAWS?

The Legal & Welfare Service (LAWS) is a free, no-obligation legal and welfare service that can be provided at any hospital, neuro rehabilitation centre or other location which cares for those with a brain injury. LAWS is delivered at each location by several Brain Injury Group member law firms, with support from specialist financial and welfare advisers.

Do your members have the right expertise to deal with people affected by brain injury?

Each of our member firms has a proven track record in supporting people affected by brain injury. Their legal expertise is a given, but they are also involved in promoting brain injury awareness and active in their local brain injury community and charities.

How will the service be delivered?

The frequency and format of service delivery is tailored to meet the requirements of each facility; our experience to date is that there are recurring 'mix and match' elements such as:

- Patients and/or their families contact our members directly by email or phone at any time using a dedicated email address, or your staff can put patients in touch with us
- Representatives from our member firms visit the facility on a regular basis; the frequency will usually depend on the size of the facility
- During their visits, they meet with people who have booked a private appointment, and offer a confidential 'drop-in' service for everyone else
- Our members can make short presentations on common topics related to brain injury which everyone is free to attend, and offer open discussion sessions that develop according to the interests of the people in attendance

What do we have to do?

You need to nominate an individual to be our main contact point. We will provide leaflets to be included in welcome packs, posters to promote any presentations or information sessions, and a series of 'Fast Facts' factsheets that might be useful.

We'll also need a room suitable for private appointments and somewhere to meet with small groups of people.

What subjects are covered?

Our member firms can deal with pretty much any legal query related to brain injury and, because of their experience, a whole lot more besides. And if the person in attendance can't answer the question, they'll refer it to a colleague who can. Regular subjects we deal with include:

Mental capacity including Court of Protection and Powers of Attorney
Financial matters such as debt, welfare benefits, budgeting and planning
Employment | Housing | Education | Care in the community
Personal injury claims and criminal injuries compensation
Family and matrimonial matters | Wills and living wills

If the member firm can't deal with welfare benefit questions, they will be referred to the benefits experts at the firm of Independent Financial Advisers we work closely with.

Of course not all of the queries presented will demand a legal solution, and our members will be happy to signpost people to a range of support services and information on other organisations that may be able to provide the support they need.

How much advice will be offered?

It's impossible to predict the nature of enquiries or how much advice might be needed in the first instance, but it typically equates to around an hour of the relevant professional's time.

What happens if the free advice doesn't solve the problem?

If additional advice is needed or actions required that might incur costs, all law firms are obliged to provide an estimate of what that cost might be, but there is no obligation for your patients or their families to instruct our member firm. They are perfectly at liberty to speak with someone else to get a second opinion or an alternative quotes, and our members will be happy to advise on how to find an appropriate adviser – it's impossible to underestimate the benefit of specialist expertise in this complex field.

What if people can't get to the sessions but need advice?

Our member firms will be happy to make arrangements to speak to or meet with anyone at their convenience – by phone, on site or possibly in their home. Alternatively it may be possible to deal with the enquiry via email.

How can LAWS help people affected by brain injury?

The majority of people do not have plans in place to meet their commitments in the event of suffering a catastrophic injury. Identifying and managing certain legal and financial issues with the help of LAWS might go some way to relieve the inevitable anxiety, and to identifying funding sources that enable access to rehabilitation resources to aid their recovery.

What are the advantages to this facility?

- it is a cost-free, patient-centred service
- the law firms will not act against the hospital / facility for anyone who uses LAWS
- the service is delivered by professionals in an ethical way which also meets all legal standards
- it avoids the appearance of favouring one particular law firm
- staff will be able to signpost people to sources of advice and information which they are unable to provide themselves
- outcomes for individual patients may be improved with access to additional funds enabling them to benefit from earlier and/or additional rehabilitation and maintain and build on progress made as an in-patient when discharged
- by helping patients to identify funding sources to assist with their care, LAWS may help speed up and/or improve the level of rehabilitation and care they receive leading to improved outcomes for the facility
- we can provide free training for staff who deal with brain injured patients and their families on a range of related legal and specialist subjects, delivered at a place and time convenient for the facility and its staff
- It might be possible to 'white label' LAWS Online as a specific resource for your facility

To explore the possibility of this valuable service being made available to the patients/services users and their families within your facility please contact:

Julie McCarthy by email at julie.mccarthy@braininjurygroup.co.uk or on 07740 283080

The Brain Injury Group exists to support individuals and families affected by brain injury, and the health and social care professionals working in this specialist field.

Our mission is to provide anyone affected by brain injury with access to legal, financial and welfare services delivered by proven experts in the field who have been chosen not only for their skills and knowledge, but also for their passion and dedication to helping people.

