

## New Arrivals

The team has welcomed 2 new faces this summer.



Stacy Gee joined the Neurotrauma team in March and is currently working as a Trainee Solicitor. Stacy qualifies as a Solicitor in September 2009. Stacy adds, "I am very excited and pleased to have joined the team, as I find the work both challenging and rewarding. The team is incredibly friendly and supportive, and I very much enjoy working with our clients. I look forward to a successful future here."



Also joining the team is Isabel Emerson. Isabel is a graduate of Law and has completed her Legal Practice Course. She joins the team as a Paralegal, and will be working towards becoming a fully qualified Solicitor in the future. Of her new role, Isabel says, "I am delighted to join such a dedicated and friendly team. Everyone without exception has been welcoming and supportive. The team have involved me in all aspects of their work, giving me the opportunity to progress my legal skills. It is a happy place to work and I am really enjoying my time here."

## Charity Abseil for Brake



On 5 April 2009, four brave volunteers from Irwin Mitchell agreed to abseil the 30 metre descent into Hillsborough (from beneath the clock tower of the South Stand). Kay Bailey, Claire Bracewell, Marcos Eleftheriou, and Alistair Hammerton took on the challenge in order to raise money for Brake, a national road safety charity which aims to reduce death and injury on UK roads and provides support to those who have been bereaved or injured as a result of a road traffic accident.

After having donned their safety gear, the team began the climb up through Hillsborough's famous stand, a climb which culminated in a nerve-wracking walk across a narrow metal bridge to the point of descent; a small ledge beneath the clock, overlooking the pitch.

One by one, the team climbed over the ledge and leant back, dangling over the pitch which was a frightening 98 feet below. After 'walking' a few metres down the advertising boards, all that was left was to hope for the best and allow gravity to take its course!

All four managed to complete the challenge, raising a healthy £400 for Brake in the process.

## Irwin Mitchell supporting Brain Injury Awareness Week 2009

### Saturday 9th May

The Irwin Mitchell 5-a-side team took part in the Brain Injury Rehab Trust's football tournament at their Goole Centre.

### Monday 11th May

Joanne Witherington helped support Headway Leicester's funding raising manager to rattle tins as part of their street collection!

### Tuesday 12th May

Caroline Jepson and Joanne Witherington visited the Keresforth Unit in Barnsley to deliver raffle prizes and to help support their open day!

### Wednesday 13th May

Neil Whiteley attended the Headway North Derbyshire event raising awareness around bike safety for children.

### Thursday 14th May

Stacy Gee provided information to students at Doncaster College for Headway Doncaster, this event was also supported by Brake.

### Friday 22nd May

Irwin Mitchell and Headway North Derbyshire helped promote bike safety awareness at New Whittington School in Chesterfield.

# Neuro Focus

Summer 2009 edition



## Welcome...

to the first issue of Neuro Focus, the Irwin Mitchell brain and spinal injuries newsletter for South Yorkshire and the East Midlands. We will be looking at issues relevant to brain and spinal injuries as well as the charitable causes that we support that we know many of you are also involved with. If you have any feedback on this issue or would like us to address any particular issues, please email Kate Petchey at: [kate.petchey@irwinmitchell.com](mailto:kate.petchey@irwinmitchell.com)



## Mark's Mum Thanks Paramedics for Saving His Life

by Rachael Aram

**Mark Downs, from Castlehill in Eckington is currently going through an extensive rehabilitation programme after sustaining a severe brain injury while at work in October 2007.**

Sandra Downs, Mark's mother, said: "Mark suffered a serious head injury and, without the help of paramedics, things could have turned out much worse. Without support from the medical specialists who treated Mark we would never have been able to get to the stage of Mark's rehabilitation that we are at now.

The hard work will continue and the road to Mark leading a full and independent life is just beginning."

Mark sustained a severe brain injury after being hit by a metal sheet being carried in a tandem lift and was knocked against a steel metal skip.

Paramedics arrived at the scene and initially treated Mark, who was then admitted to the Neurosurgical Unit at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield as an emergency case.

Scans revealed a deep skull fracture, brain contusions and right sided haemorrhage which required surgery for 16 hours. He remained at the Royal Hallamshire for 3 months following the accident, at which time he was transferred to the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield for neuro-rehabilitation.

Titanium plates were surgically inserted in order to protect Mark's brain as a result of the extensive damage to his skull. Mark also had multiple fractures to both eye sockets which were crushed and have left him blind in his right eye with only partial vision in the left. He also has problems with his balance and left sided hemiplegia. He has lost his sense of smell and taste.

Mark has since been discharged from hospital and is now back home with his family despite his horrific injuries.

Rachael Aram, Associate in the Neurotrauma Team said, "Mark's rehabilitation is ongoing and he is receiving considerable support from his family. He relies heavily on his siblings and parents who take him out in the community and encourage him to progress with his therapy in order to gain further independence. The family are supported by professionals we have retained to assist Mark to maximise his independence.

He is undertaking further speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy in the community and has received assistance from the Royal Society for the Blind. He's also currently on the waiting list for a guide dog to assist his independence in the community."

Sandra and Mark are extremely grateful to all the various medical, rehabilitation and charity personnel who have helped Mark on the road to recovery, without whom Mark would not have made such great strides to date.



## Going Online at the Spinal Injury Unit

by Neil Whiteley

Spinal injury patients can often spend several weeks if not months undergoing in-patient rehabilitation in hospital. Aspire, a national charity supporting people with spinal injuries, work tirelessly to support IT-based solutions that help people make the most of any opportunity to take control of their lives again.

Irwin Mitchell's IT network security officer, Scott Flower, has volunteered to work alongside Aspire to introduce a new wireless network at the Northern General Hospital's spinal injury rehabilitation ward. Scott assisted in the design and deployment of the wireless network to provide internet access for patients.

Scott said that "As well as providing the wireless access, we were also able to ensure that only authorised users can gain access, access to potentially inappropriate web sites is prohibited and we have also helped to improve the training that Aspire provide."

Richard Allcroft, volunteer co-ordinator at Aspire's IT Centre at the hospital said "The wireless network is proving a real success, and it's really come together after a great team effort by the Occupational Therapists, ward staff, management and all the outside help that was needed to make it happen. A big thanks to long time supporters Aspire and Irwin Mitchell, especially Scott from IM who offered his technical knowledge and more importantly time to get it 'live' and running."

*"We have worked with Aspire on a number of their local projects and we're delighted to assist them with the wireless network, providing a direct benefit for patients."*

Neil Whiteley, Irwin Mitchell

Patients on the unit are able to use their own laptop or borrow one provided by Aspire. It is hoped that in the next few weeks the system will be extended to two more wards in the Spinal Injury Unit.

Neil Whiteley in the Sheffield office added, "we have worked with Aspire on a number of their local projects and we're delighted to assist them with the wireless network, providing a direct benefit for patients."

*There can be a lot of "down time" when patients are not able to see visitors and are not busy with their therapies. Wireless access will enable them to keep in touch with family and friends, access bank accounts and online shopping and give patients the independence of sorting their own affairs out for themselves over the internet".*

### Contact the team

Tel: **0114 274 4518**

Post: **Riverside East, 2 Millsands, Sheffield S3 8DT**

Email: **kate.petchey@irwinmitchell.com**



## theheadinjury.com

The new website launched by Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, offering specialist services and information dedicated to brain injury survivors, their families and carers and professionals working in the brain injury field.



## Hero's Bravery Rewarded

by Kate Petchey

**The brave actions of Alan Smith, 59, were recognised at an exclusive award ceremony held recently at Sheffield Wednesday Football Club. Alan was presented with a special award by the Carnegie Hero Fund Trust in recognition of his extraordinary bravery.**

On 24 November 2006, Alan was on his way home from work when he alighted his tram at the Donetsk Way stop in Sheffield. As Alan made his way off the tram, an altercation broke out between three fellow passengers. Alan stepped in to try and protect two young men who were being subjected to an assault, and was himself knocked down by their assailant, hitting his head on the ground.

As a consequence of the attack, Alan suffered a very severe brain injury, which has resulted in significant cognitive and physical impairments. Alan remains wheelchair dependent and has ongoing difficulties with his speech and other cognitive functions. Previously a dedicated worker, Alan has been unable to return to any kind of employment, and is now cared for by his wife, Elaine, with the assistance of support workers provided by the local authority.

The citation from the charity, which was specifically set up to recognise the extraordinary heroics of ordinary people in everyday situations, reads, "Regardless of possible risks to his own safety, Alan acted with immense courage and, without hesitation, attempted to protect other members of the public who were not known to him. The heroism of Alan Smith has been recognised as falling within the scope of the Carnegie Hero Fund Trust. His name will be inscribed on the Roll of Honour and he will receive a certificate. The Trustees will maintain a continuing interest in his welfare."



A special ceremony was held at the Hillsborough ground, attended by Alan's family and friends, along with representatives from the police, medical staff from the hospital where Alan underwent treatment and rehabilitation, and other key personnel involved in helping Alan following his injury. Also in attendance was the Sheffield Wednesday chairman, Lee Stafford, who said he was "humbled" to be in Alan's presence. Alan, a lifelong Wednesday fan, was overheard requesting that Mr Stafford add his name to the squad for next season!

Kate Petchey, Solicitor in the Neurotrauma Team, added, "I would like to congratulate Alan on his award, which is thoroughly deserved. He and his family have suffered significant emotional and financial difficulty as they have struggled to come to terms with Alan's disability. It is fantastic to see Alan's achievements recognised in this way".

## Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards 2009

On 1st April 2009, the new Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (often shortened to "DOLS") came into force. This new code of practice applies where it is proposed to implement an arrangement of care or treatment that would deprive a person of his or her liberty within a hospital, care home or even a rehabilitation centre. The Safeguards apply whether or not the arrangement is funded by public funds or privately, and regardless of whether the facility where the person will be cared for is publicly or privately owned.

It is a requirement to follow the processes laid down in the Safeguards wherever a deprivation of liberty is likely to arise. Identifying such a situation is not always straightforward so examples are provided in the regulations. Whilst the new DOLS procedures create a new layer of regulations, forms and processes which may be seen by some as cumbersome and an

unwelcome further burden, they close a perceived legal "loophole" which has been identified in the way that the UK complies with European Human Rights safeguards. They affect some of the most vulnerable people in society and have the effect of reinforcing some of the patient-centred measures in the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Anyone working in the field should become familiar with the new procedures. There is a wealth of information available on the Department of Health website at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) (use the internal search engine for all the links).

**The team at Irwin Mitchell are providing in-house introductory training seminars for the DOLS procedures. For more details contact [neil.whiteley@irwinmitchell.com](mailto:neil.whiteley@irwinmitchell.com)**