

## Getting back to work with a Brachial Plexus Injury

The Brachial Plexus is a group of nerves that come from the spinal cord in the neck and travel down the arm. These nerves control the muscles of the shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand. Serious Brachial Plexus injuries can cause permanent disability of the arm.

### Executive Summary

James suffered a serious Brachial Plexus Injury. Through expert Case Management by Unite Professionals, recruiting a team that included specialist Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Psychology, he was back at work, driving a car, managing his condition and adapting to his life within 12 months.

**The Case Manager** understood the value of living a meaningful life and pushed hard to help James to identify his goals and ambitions. Her expertise in Brachial Plexus injuries meant she knew what was needed right from the start. Her speed of action meant that James recovered much faster than may have been anticipated resulting in reduced long term costs.

### The Specific Challenges

**Injury:** Multiple traumatic orthopaedic injuries including injury to the Brachial Plexus affecting full range of movement of the right arm.

**Pain:** Significant pain experienced by James was affecting activities, including sleep and mood.

**Mobility:** James could no longer drive due to his injuries.

**Psychological:** James's life had been significantly affected by his injuries and the impact of these changes affected his mood, sleep and ability to accept what had happened to him.

### How Unite Professionals achieved this outcome

The Case Manager, arranged an Initial Needs Assessment (INA). Within 3 weeks of the assessment her recommendations were being progressed with the agreement of the client, claimant's solicitor and the third party insurer.

She assembled a team consisting of NHS and Private clinicians and ensured there were regular 12 weekly meetings between all professionals to review the case. The NHS team consisted of surgeons, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists using a Primus BTE machine to assist with readiness for work and a Multidisciplinary Pain Management team.

Additional Private therapies the Case Manager recommended for James included:

A specialist Peripheral Neurological Physiotherapist who utilised Exogen, an ultrasound device used to speed up bone healing and Functional Electrical Stimulation, a device used to stimulate nerve function.

A Clinical Psychologist to support James to adjust to his circumstances, manage his pain, sleep and mood and cope with the slow rate of recovery of a Brachial Plexus injury.

A Private Occupational Therapist specialising in delivering graded vocational rehabilitation to ensure there was a goal focused, graded programme of work hardening in readiness for a potential return to work as a mechanic.

Massage and lymph drainage therapy to ensure that recovery following intensive rehabilitation sessions was supported and that the overall sensory and motor input to the recovering nerves was improved by removing any fluid retention.

A home based programme of rehabilitation using visualisation, computer games and daily routines as rehabilitation tools ensuring there was carryover between sessions and that progress was generalised to everyday activity.

Private family gym membership with swimming pool to encourage fitness and quality time with his family and social integration.

A temporary taxi account pending a driving assessment and provision of an adapted car.

Case Management support with benefits during the rehabilitation process and advocacy for release of funds to manage debts.

She managed the resources completely under the rehab code, including:

- \* Costs
- \* Progress of rehabilitation and sustainability
- \* Intensity / frequency of intervention
- \* Proportionality
- \* Duration of anticipated treatment
- \* Impact for client on independence, quality of life, return to work options, pain, mood, sleep, physical recovery and relationships

#### **The Outcomes:**

James said: "The injury was life changing and I wasn't sure how I was going to cope, I am an active man and enjoy work as a mechanic. As soon as my Case Manager was appointed things happened quickly. She explained everything to me, we set goals and she sourced the very best treatment on the NHS and privately that was available. It was tough, but with her support, I understood what had to be done, the time frames and got on with it. She was there for me when I needed her, many times outside of normal hours. She made a real difference and I can honestly say that without her I don't think I'd be as mobile or back to work now. She drove my recovery and I cannot thank her enough."

#### **Outcomes**

Back at work 4 days a week with adaptations to workplace

Driving an adapted vehicle

Pain self-managed

Psychological adjustment achieved, improvement in sleep and mood.