

Edition 14 - Summer 2015

Focus

on Spinal Injury



Also:

>> **Great Adaptations**
Improving independence

>> **Join the Dots**
Learning good wheelchair skills

>> **SIA Awards 2015**
Rebuilding Lives Awards

In this edition:

Great Adaptations

Don't Quit, Do It

Back Up - Join the Dots

SIA Rebuilding Lives Awards

Irwin Mitchell opens in Middlesbrough

Cycling for SIA

Access All Areas

Forthcoming events 2015

Welcome...

... to the fourteenth edition of Focus on Spinal Injury, where we take a look at the world of spinal injuries in closer detail.

In this edition we take a look at our online interactive house which shows the range of modifications that can be made to allow a seriously injured person to live their life as independently as possible. We also take a look at how we have supported national spinal cord injury charities, Back Up and SIA, as well as some of our recently launched online campaigns.

If you have any feedback on this edition of Focus on Spinal Injury or would like to feature in a future edition, please do let us know by emailing us at:

SCIGroup@irwinmitchell.com

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Great Adaptations

Spinal cord and other serious injuries such as amputation and orthopaedic can cause huge disruption to the lives of both the injured individual and their loved ones.



At Irwin Mitchell we appreciate the dramatic and sometimes life changing impact these injuries can have on people and their families. We pride ourselves on making a real difference and helping our clients to regain their independence.

Irwin Mitchell has partnered with JS Parker, a leading specialist in brain and spinal injury case management and rehabilitation, to explore the changes that may be required to a home if someone has a serious injury that results in them becoming a wheelchair user - some, or all of the time.

While major structural and furnishing changes in a property may be required, many aspects of a property can stay the same, ensuring that a person remains in their current home and can live as independently as possible.

These adaptations* are designed to enable the disabled individual post-injury to live a life with as much independence as possible. The home environment should be easy to navigate and make day-to-day life comfortable, which will improve work, rest and leisure activities as well as family life.

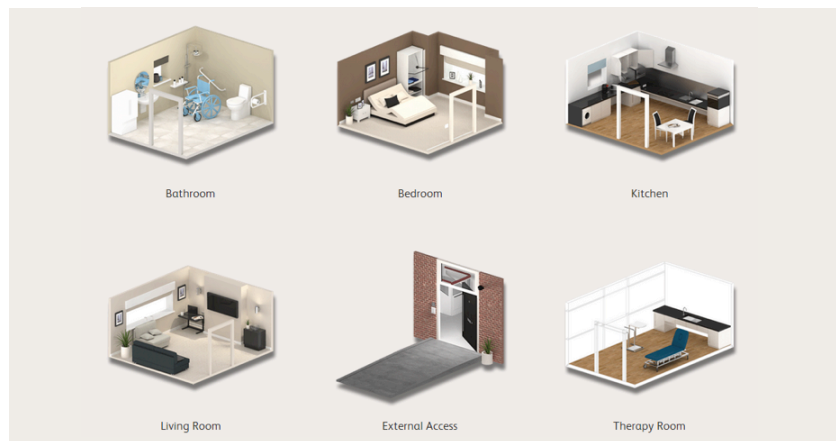


Visit our website to explore our interactive house. You can also read about our client David Holmes and see how we've been able to create a home for him that allows him to live independently.

Great Adaptations and an interview with David Holmes was recently featured in The Sunday Times Home magazine.

www.irwinmitchell.com/great-adaptations.html

[#GreatAdaptations](https://twitter.com/GreatAdaptations)



*Please note that these adaptations are purely for demonstration purposes and any adaptations and modifications to a home or new house are assessed on an individual basis and tailored specifically to the person's current and future requirements.

CYCLING FOR SIA

London to Amsterdam

By Cathy Leech



A motley crew of 23 cyclists left Tonbridge in Kent on Spinal Cord Injuries Awareness Day (15 May 2015) at the crack of dawn heading for Dover. Full of enthusiasm (and a full English breakfast) we soon found out Kent is hilly, very, very hilly. Later that day we'd had quite enough of the Kent hills, especially after a road closed diversion took us up the steepest, most horrid of lanes.

If you heard a disconcerting heaving sound that day, it was probably my breathing. I reckon it would have troubled the Richter Scale. Hard work has its own reward, and this was a massive, long, enjoyable descent into Dover and the promise of a delicious meal on the ferry in the pleasant surroundings of numerous French exchange teenagers.

Dawn broke the next day in Eindhoven, but unfortunately my roommate Pauline and I missed it. We made the mistake of relying on the digital clock of the in-room TV, and as we unknowingly sauntered down to breakfast, we saw the rest of the group in full waterproofs and hi-vis disappearing off. Bolting down a quick coffee we set off in hot pursuit determined to catch the peloton. This proved easier than we feared as they had taken a wrong turn and were waiting for telephone advice from the organisers. Clearly, we too had taken the same wrong turn as we met the group looking lost. This was very reassuring for everyone because clearly it was a dodgy sign which sent us all the wrong way, not our fault!

The rest of day two was wet and windy. Holland is pretty flat (who knew?!) and the rain and wind was a challenge. But the great thing about riding with SIA and the awesome hand cyclists is that spirits are always high. There is always someone interesting to chat to or you can even race a section of the day's route if you are particularly shallow and competitive (over-sensitive? Moi?).

Dinner on day two was at a new-build diner. Apparently the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) isn't a high priority thing in Holland, this diner had no wheelchair access upstairs so we had to manhandle the three chaps in wheelchairs up the stairs. They were all very understanding and good sports. Or perhaps just so hungry for dinner they were too weak to make a fuss. Either way, it was a bit shocking that Dutch new build restaurants did not have full wheelchair access.

Day three was sunny and bright. Waterproofs abandoned and sun cream out. It was a spectacular end to a lovely trip, still very flat though. We were met in Amsterdam by some lovely people from the Netherlands Spinal Association who had made us a celebratory buffet.

The event was a great success. We raised over £40,000 for SIA and Pauline and I raised £10,000 between us from our Bicycle Ball. For anyone keen to support the SIA again, The Bicycle Ball is on 4 December 2015 at The Cinnamon Club, Bowdon, Cheshire. Please do contact me if you would like to come along:

cathy.leech@irwinmitchell.com

DON'T QUIT DO IT

Inspiring journeys of rehabilitation

A new campaign to highlight the benefits of sport in helping people recover from serious injuries and other major traumas in their lives has been launched.

To coincide with National Paralympic Day, the "Don't Quit, Do It" campaign features a series of videos of our clients who have used sport to help overcome their injuries including wheelchair badminton, amputee cycling, rowing and horseriding.

There are 9.4 million people with disabilities in the UK but only one in six takes part in sport regularly, and Irwin Mitchell hopes that the campaign will also encourage more people to get involved.

Experts at Irwin Mitchell find that sport not only helps with physical aspects of rehabilitation but can also motivate and inspire people with disabilities to get involved in new activities and learn to come to terms with their new situation.

Those featured in the videos have all suffered injuries and have instructed Irwin Mitchell to help them with their rehabilitation programmes. Some are now even competing at a high level in disability sport and are representing GB in various competitions.

To find out more visit:
www.irwinmitchell.com/dont-quit-do-it

#DontQuitDoIt



David Follett was introduced to para badminton after suffering a serious spinal cord injury following a road traffic collision. He is one of England's leading players and is now ranked 13th in the world.

JOIN THE DOTS



For many people with spinal cord injuries learning good wheelchair skills is the key to independence and a good quality of life. Whilst physiotherapists in the Spinal Injury Centres can teach the basic skills needed for life in a wheelchair it is often only by learning from experienced wheelchair users, that these skills can be truly mastered.

In 2001 the charity Back Up recognised this and set up a wheelchair skills training initiative which they took into Spinal Centres. Working alongside the hospital staff, they helped many newly injured people learn techniques and gain confidence in using a wheelchair. Back Up have now expanded their training with a new "Join the Dots" community based wheelchair skills programme, which we are delighted to be sponsoring.

The first five sessions in Aylesbury, Sheffield, Middlesbrough and Pinderfields have been a great success. Back Up Outreach and Support Manager Pete Donnelly said: "It is essential for people to have the confidence and skills to get around their communities in their wheelchair when they leave hospital.



Irwin Mitchell volunteers help out at National Spinal Injuries Centre, Stoke Mandeville.

That's why we are building on our wheelchair skills training sessions and now taking the training into local towns. It's great to have the support of Irwin Mitchell for this vital new service and fantastic that we have volunteers from their offices to join the sessions and experience them first hand!"

In Sheffield, two ex-patients from the Spinal Centre were able to come on the course, because of the additional help available from the Irwin Mitchell volunteers.

More information can be found at:
www.backuptrust.org.uk/jointhedots

At the end of the day one of the course attendees thanked Back Up by writing:

"Just a line to say how much I gained from attending the course last week in Sheffield, I 'got' the back wheel balance very quickly and am practicing at home! I think it will come in really useful for France (dropped kerbs being an unpredictable quantity!). Please thank Andy and his volunteers for their help, it was really enjoyable meeting them all."

SIA Rebuilding Lives After Spinal Cord Injury Awards 2015



Irwin Mitchell were proud to be a sponsor at the Spinal Injuries Association Rebuilding Lives after Spinal Cord Injury Awards, which took place on 4 June 2015 at Hilton Metropole, Birmingham. The Awards acknowledge the unsung heroes and inspirational achievers in the world of spinal cord injury.

Many of the dedicated staff at the various Spinal Injury Centres around the country picked up Awards including Mr Soni, from the North West Regional Spinal Centre, Southport, who won the Liz Martin Award for his groundbreaking work on respiratory difficulties faced by tetraplegics after injury. Claire Guy, Ruth Peachment and Vicky Munro from the NSIC, Stoke Mandeville all won individual Awards for Leadership, Health and Wellbeing, and Vocation and Employment, while the physio team from Stoke Mandeville won the Outstanding Team Award. Jackie McRae, from RNOH, Stanmore picked up the Award for Innovation and Research. In addition there were many nominations from these and other Spinal Centres, and congratulations must go to all of them.



Richard Dawson (Irwin Mitchell), Mr and Mrs Soni and Jane Wright (Irwin Mitchell).

This year there were awards given to spinal cord injured individuals who are inspiring others through their activities. In the category for Inspirational Sports Personality we were delighted that one of our ex-clients, David Follett, was nominated for his work in promoting the game of para-badminton to the extent that it has now been named as a sport at the 2020 Paralympics. Sadly David did not take the prize which was won by Shaun Newcomb, a very worthy winner who has been inspiring table tennis players for many years.

The overall winner of the Stephen Bradshaw Award, was Gareth Thomas, who picked up his award in the Armed Forces Achievement category. He gave a very moving speech, which concluded the Awards ceremony, but for many the celebrations went on well into the early morning! And so the event ended for another year, but the work goes on, and behind the scenes are so many individuals devoting themselves to improving the lives of those who are spinal cord injured. Well done and thank you to you all.

Irwin Mitchell opens in Middlesbrough

We are delighted to announce the opening of our new consulting office at The Gateway in Middlesbrough. The Gateway is run by the Keiro Group and, as well as being an information hub, it provides specialist nursing care, rehabilitation and access to transitional housing, to help people who have suffered strokes, serious spinal and brain injuries and other complex needs to achieve independence.

As the current holders of the Rehabilitation First claimant Solicitor of the Year Award, for our commitment to helping people with serious injury make progress in their lives, we believe the new consulting office provides the best platform for meeting the needs of existing and new clients in Teesside.

John Davis, Regional Managing Partner for Irwin Mitchell in the North East, said: "We are already representing many clients in the area as they seek to get their lives back on track following serious injury, so it is a natural evolution for us to have a base in Teesside. The Gateway is a visionary facility, in a great location and is very accessible for people with complex needs and disabilities across Teesside."

Boda Gallon, Keiro Group Chief Executive, said: "People with disabilities and their families often need legal advice and somewhere to turn to for help. With Irwin Mitchell's commitment to assisting people with rehabilitation and care, it makes perfect sense to launch a consulting office with legal advice alongside the wide choice of services and information already provided at The Gateway's Hub."



Irwin Mitchell Middlesbrough team.

Access All Areas

Irwin Mitchell examine the accessibility of live music to disabled people



Access All Areas looks at the experience of people with a disability at music festivals, our campaign to highlight both the problems they face when seeing live music, as well as their positive experiences at those venues that are fully accessible to people with a disability.

We've sent two wheelchair users to some of the big summer festivals to find out what improvements can be made, as well as identifying the positive aspects of the festival experience for people with a disability.

Rosie Mayes is one of the people we've asked to look at the accessibility of summer festivals. A client of Irwin Mitchell, six years ago Rosie was involved in a road traffic collision that left her tetraplegic, with only a limited amount of movement in her right arm. She spent 10 days in intensive care and was in hospital for a further 10 months, recovering from severe spinal injuries.

We also asked Charlotte Fairbank, a paralegal working in our Bristol office, to report on her experience of music festivals. In 2007, she was

left paraplegic and a wheelchair user, after falling off a hay bale. However, she remains extremely independent, beginning a four year university course in 2010 which included a year in Italy. She's now very active, playing tennis and swimming once a week.

Follow Rosie and Charlotte's reviews at: www.irwinmitchell.com/accessallareas

[#IMAccessAllAreas](https://twitter.com/IMAccessAllAreas)

Forthcoming Events 2015

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| 3 September | Back Up Dragon Boat Race, Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre, London
www.backuptrust.org.uk |
| 9 - 10 September | DNEX - Disability North Exhibition 2015, Newcastle Racecourse, Newcastle upon Tyne
www.disabilitynorth.org.uk |
| 20 September | SIA Going the Distance 2015, London Bridges Walk
Irwin Mitchell are proud to sponsor the Tower Bridge on the walk - see you there
www.spinal.co.uk |
| 7 November | Back Up Ball, Birmingham Hilton Metropole
www.backuptrust.org.uk |
| 12 November | MASCIP "Continuing Healthcare: Does it?" IMAGO Conference Centre, Loughborough University
www.mascip.co.uk |
| 19 November | Irwin Mitchell Rehabilitation Conference: Rehabilitation: Can it be Achieved in the Community?
Birmingham Hilton Metropole
www.irwinmitchell.com #rehabachieves15 |
| 26 November | SIA Thanksgiving Ball, Dorchester Hotel, London
www.spinal.co.uk |



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