

EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION

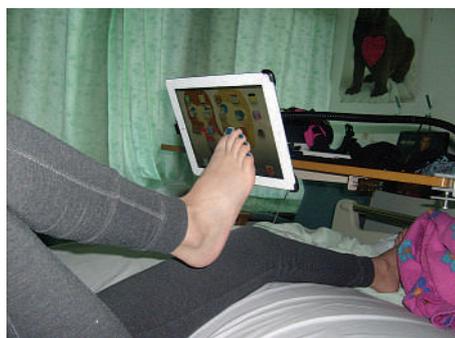
Due to the nature of SCI, some children spend extensive periods of time in hospital during their rehabilitation. Time in hospital is not only disruptive in terms of being away from home, family and friends, but it can also disrupt school life. The Hospital Teaching Service works with children and young people who visit the National Spinal Injuries Centre (NSIC) to help cater for their educational needs while receiving care in hospital.

St Francis Ward at the NSIC at Stoke Mandeville Hospital is the only dedicated rehabilitation facility for SCI people aged 18-years-and-under. Children and young people who stay on the ward for long periods of time are not only supported in terms of their physical and emotional wellbeing, but also their educational needs.

The Hospital Teaching Service operates during school term time and is part of the Aspire Alternative Provision for young people in Buckinghamshire. All students are provided with the opportunity to learn, be successful and feel safe. The service is delivered by highly committed and experienced staff, forming part of the multi-disciplinary team overseeing all elements of a child's development during their time in hospital.

To meet the educational needs of the child the Hospital Teaching Service will:

- ensure that education is engaging, challenging and fun
- bear in mind the circumstances that brought them to hospital and assess, plan and evaluate each student's individual needs
- give the young person choices about their education
- seek information about their injury, medical condition and how the family is coping from the hospital
- work together with the whole family to keep education alive
- seek information concerning a student's educational progress from their school
- produce when appropriate a personal educational plan for long-stay children
- work together with the multi-disciplinary



- team to support the student's physical, emotional and educational needs
- provide access to public examinations
- liaise with the student's school to support the process of reintegration
- provide leaflets with recommendations about returning to school with SCI for students, families and schools
- provide schools and Local Education Authorities with specific recommendations for each student prior to discharge

Jo Jones, Teacher in Charge of the Hospital Teaching Service said: "We offer a flexible service based on the needs of the young person. The young people on St Francis Ward are already under a lot of stress due to their injury and there are often a lot of emotional issues that result from being in hospital and away from families and friends. In the strange world of the hospital, education is the one thing the young person and family view as normal. The young person doesn't want to miss out and feels safe in education. Our job is to rehabilitate the young person back into what they know. To assist this, we provide a variety of opportunities so that education can be seen as therapeutic and not something to be undergone."

RESOURCES

In order to support the educational needs of the young person throughout their time in hospital and during their return to school, a range of leaflets has been developed by the Hospital Teaching Service to provide support and advice for the SCI individual, their family and school. The leaflets include *Going back to school*, *Supporting PE in schools following spinal cord injury* and *What is Autonomic Dysreflexia?*

The *Going back to school* guide provides practical advice to help young people prepare for returning to school, and to help them overcome any emotional challenges they might face.



AUTONOMIC DYSREFLEXIA

Outside of the SCI community, most people have never heard of Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD). It is important that any adults responsible for the care of young SCI people are aware of the condition. AD mainly affects SCI people with an injury at T6 or above and can cause a sudden onset of acute hypertension. Causes can include a blocked catheter, an overfull bowel or ingrowing toenail.

In collaboration with Dr Allison Graham, Consultant Physician in SCI at the NSIC, a leaflet called *What is Autonomic Dysreflexia?* has also been produced by the Hospital Teaching Service. It contains vital information that can be passed on to the child's school, including information about the signs and symptoms of the condition, causes and treatment options.

REGAINING CONTROL

With so much out of the child's control, they are given the option as to whether or not, and to what extent, they engage with the teaching service. Jo Jones added: "We ensure that education is as much fun as possible and give choices about how involved they are with the service. The Hospital Teaching Service aims to keep education alive for the young person, which we hope helps their overall wellbeing during their stay in hospital."



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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The Back-Up Trust provides an inclusive education toolkit which offers advice and practical tips for children and young SCI people due to return to school life. It features testimonies from professionals, young people and family members. For more information visit www.backuptrust.org.uk