

THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT  
and  
GOAL PLANNING PROGRAMME  
at the  
National Spinal Injuries Centre

## **INTRODUCTION**

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### **Needs Assessment and Goal Planning**

Needs assessment and goal planning are ways of ensuring that your rehabilitation programme is geared towards your individual needs. The primary goal of rehabilitation is safe discharge into the community, giving you the skills appropriate to your level of lesion to deal with new challenges and adjustments. Our rehabilitation emphasises needs and abilities, rather than disabilities.

Goal planning involves a team in the setting of clear and constructive goals, enabling you to begin to manage the consequences of your injury. To deal with such changes, new skills have to be learnt, old skills have to be re-established, and compensatory skills may need to be developed. This can also assist communication between you and your family and other members of the team. It is hoped that you and your family may feel more involved in deciding the course of your rehabilitation.

### **The Keyworker**

A keyworker will be appointed from one of the professional groups in the Centre, ie doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational

therapists, clinical psychologists and discharge coordinators. The role of the keyworker is to become familiar with your particular needs.

The first role of the keyworker is to help you understand the areas of need that you will now begin to address. You may then be able to understand how the resources of the Centre can help you manage your new needs. The keyworker is there to give you information and support and to advocate on your behalf. The keyworker will also arrange for a Needs Assessment Checklist to be administered and will coordinate goal planning meetings following its completion. These meetings will involve you and members of the rehabilitation team.

## **AREAS OF NEED**

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### **Physical well-being**

Generally this refers to looking after your skin and the management of your bladder and bowel. It also includes dealing with problems associated with your chest, joints, nutrition and medication. In the early stages, spinal stability needs to be achieved and your progress will need to be monitored.

The doctors will explain the nature of your injury and the extent of any paralysis. Nursing staff can provide you with practical information on how to manage your skin, bladder, bowel, nutrition and general health. The physiotherapists can help you with the care of joints, posture, chest and fitness. They may also arrange hydrotherapy, if appropriate. The Patient and Relative Information Officer, through the group patient education programme, also deals with many of these issues.

### **Accommodation**

As a result of your injury, your present home may not be completely suitable. The occupational therapists may carry out a home visit or arrange for one to be made. They may also advise you regarding adaptations and equipment which may be necessary, suggest rehousing, if required, and will discuss with you and your family the choices available. Financial implications and some of the bureaucratic procedures involved may also be addressed. A member of staff will also liaise with your home Social Services Department to ensure that a community care manager is allocated to enable your needs to be addressed in the community.

### **Mobility**

Getting out and about is as important now as it has always been. There are a variety of ways of achieving this. Discussion will take

place about the best way of getting in and out of bed, and about moving around in your wheelchair.

The physiotherapists can help you prepare for this by involving you in exercises to improve your strength, balance, coordination and range of movements. The physiotherapists will assess your wheelchair and cushion requirements to enable you to get around as independently as possible.

If you require a powered chair, the occupational therapists will provide you with the appropriate advice. The occupational therapists will also coordinate a driving assessment, if necessary.

### **Psychological Well-being**

Following your injury, you may experience a variety of thoughts and feelings. There are few life events that can prepare us for such sudden changes. People may get depressed about the loss, may feel anxious because of fears and doubts about the future, or get angry at a sense of injustice. These may emerge as part of a normal emotional response. There are no set responses: everyone is an individual and everyone has an individual response.

The process of adjustment, adaptation and acceptance may produce emotions which are difficult to cope with alone. There are a variety of people who can help you with these issues, such as your

family, friends and members of staff. A Clinical Psychologist is available to help you manage these and more specific concerns. Our experience indicates that most people learn to manage the consequences of their disability and go on to live a quality of life that is consistent with their pre-injury expectations.

## **Finance**

People's incomes and financial commitments vary enormously. A long stay in hospital inevitably affects your financial well-being. It is the aim of the Centre that your finances remain in your control, but help and advice are available should you need it. Most general financial advice will be given by the Discharge Coordination Service who will also assist in claiming benefits to which you are entitled. They will also advise you regarding domestic bills and, if necessary, produce documents to enable a relative to manage your money whilst you are in hospital.

The Discharge Coordination Service will also give you advice regarding compensation and provide you with a list of solicitors who offer a free initial consultation. Applications for assistance from charitable sources can also be arranged where a specific need is identified.

## **Discharge Coordination**

Throughout your rehabilitation, plans will be made and acted upon concerning your return to the community. The discharge coordinators will meet with you, your family and professionals from both the NSIC and the community (ie doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers/care managers and clinical psychologists) to ensure that you achieve your desired outcome for resettlement into the community. This may include arranging meetings to which you and your family, if you wish, will be invited to discuss your progress through your rehabilitation programme and to ensure that professionals are planning and making appropriate arrangements in preparation for your return to the community.

## **Functional Independence**

This refers to activities of daily living; day-to-day tasks that we all take for granted at home and at work. You will need to learn new ways of doing these important tasks such as dressing, washing, cooking and writing. The occupational therapists can help you achieve these goals using different techniques and equipment. There is also a computer workshop. Your physiotherapist can help you prepare for these activities and you will be encouraged to continue practising these exercises with the nurses on the ward.

## **Sexuality**

Your sexuality and sexual needs remain the same, although specific aspects of sexual functioning may be impaired. The medical staff are available to discuss issues related to fertility and sexual dysfunction. Other staff members such as nurses, out-patient services, nursing staff and clinical psychologists can discuss other aspects of sexuality with you. You should find someone that you feel comfortable with to discuss these important issues.

## **Social Re-integration**

It is important to get back to your previous lifestyle as soon as possible. This will involve resuming your role within the family, at work and with your friends. It is a gradual process that will begin whilst you are in hospital, starting with a weekend in the NSIC bungalow, trips out and weekends at home.

The occupational therapists can arrange for you to speak to the Disability Employment Adviser for a work assessment and assess the work environment. As part of your weekly rehabilitation programme, time is available for ongoing sport and recreation. Opportunities also exist to discuss with other patients and staff a variety of issues relating to community discharge. As soon as you are able to it is useful to spend time in general social and recreational activities.



## **Family Support**

We are very aware that your accident/injury will have affected not only you, but your family as well. It is important that they know about your condition and progress. Whilst you will be encouraged to be as independent as possible, you may wish your family to be involved in some aspects of your care. A variety of members of the team are available to discuss their contribution and give training on particular skills. Your family will also be invited to attend Relatives' Day which is organised by the Patient and Relative Information Officer. Members of the team are always available to discuss with your family any specific concerns.

## **Personal Assistants**

The level of spinal cord injury may make you dependent on other people for a variety of tasks. The essential goal is to enable you to remain in control of your life, even though you may require help in achieving certain physical tasks.

Throughout your programme you will gradually assume more responsibility for making decisions about your needs. This will be assessed regularly and it may be that you require specialist help from the discharge coordinators and other members of the team in organising a Personal Assistant/Care Assistant to meet your needs in the community. Verbal independence is critical to your successful

return to the community. Advice on training packages and recruitment of carers is also available.

## **CONCLUSION**

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A spinal cord injury can affect all aspects of your life: physical, emotional, social and vocational. The rehabilitation process entails learning to manage these changes successfully.

Discharge from the NSIC involves many challenges and adjustments, and goal planning is a way of assessing and meeting your individual needs, to help you to leave us with the resources and confidence to cope and adapt successfully to your new environment.