PRESS RELEASE
Release date: Embargoed until 9am on Tuesday 8 March
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Charity launches campaign championing specialist care for spinal cord injured people

The Spinal Injuries Association, a national charity supporting spinal cord injured people and their families, is launching a new campaign in Parliament today. The charity is seeking to get MPs’ support of their Strike a Cord campaign, as they strive to ensure all spinal cord injured people receive the specialist treatment, care, rehabilitation and support they need to be fully integrated and empowered participants in society.

The charity believes that the quality healthcare and advice that Spinal Cord Injuries Centres in the UK provide, makes a critical difference to spinal cord injured peoples’ ability to live independent and fulfilling lives. In turn lessens the need for additional support following discharge and in the long run, save the NHS money. However, they have found that spinal cord injured peoples’ access to these specialist rehabilitation services has been hampered by shortage of beds, the loss of experienced staff and funding issues.

Charlotte Blagden and her husband, from Gloucestershire, were affected by such barriers when Andy was diagnosed with tetraplegia, after experiencing complications following surgery to remove a tumour from his shoulder. Charlotte says of her experience,

“Due to delayed discharge in the Spinal Cord Injuries Centre most local to us, Andy continued to be treated in a hospital environment that didn’t fully understand his injury, so they didn’t push to progress him. Through my perseverance and with the Spinal Injuries Association’s support, almost 12 months after his surgery, Andy finally made it into a Spinal Cord Injuries Centre, albeit miles away from our home.”

Despite the delay in receiving the care that Andy needed and the distance Charlotte had to commute to remain close to her husband, it wasn’t long before she started to see the benefit of the Spinal Cord Injuries Centre’s services. Charlotte says,

“When they took Andy in, he was a non-verbal, ventilator dependant, purée diet patient. Through hard work and dedication by the Spinal Cord Injuries Centre staff, he is now talking, eating normally and off the vent during the daytime. They turned Andy from a spectator on his life, to an active participant in his life and in our family’s life.”
The Spinal Injuries Association’s Strike a Cord campaign seeks to ensure spinal cord injured people have access to specialist healthcare and advice when they need it. They are asking MPs to support this campaign and to join the All Party Parliamentary Group on Spinal Cord Injury, to establish a strong voice that can help ensure any NHS service cuts do not prevent spinal cord injured people receiving the specialist care they need.

Talking about the Strike a Cord campaign Sue Browning, Chief Executive Officer at the charity says;

“63% of responses to our recent survey said that access to clinical expertise is the most important aspect of attending a Spinal Cord Injuries Centre. We must ensure that access to these Centres and services improves. We urge MPs to back our Strike a Cord campaign and help increase the capacity of our Spinal Cord Injuries Centres.”

Attendees of the Parliamentary launch of the Strike a Cord campaign, which takes place between 12.15pm and 3pm today, will hear from Claire Williams, Deputy Team Principal of Williams F1 Team, Michelle Howard, Chair of the Spinal Injuries Association, and Ian Lucas, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Spinal Cord Injury.

More information about the campaign is available at www.spinal.co.uk

Notes for editor:

About The Spinal Injuries Association (SIA):
The Spinal Injuries Association is the leading national user-led charity for spinal cord injured people. Being a user led organisation, we are well placed to understand the everyday needs of living with an injury. We are here to meet those needs, by providing key services to share information and experience, and to campaign for change, ensuring each person can lead a full and active life.

We aim to:
•Offer support and assistance from the time of injury and for the rest of a paralysed person’s life
•Provide services to increase an individual’s quality of life
•Support the families of newly injured people
•Increase knowledge and awareness of the causes and consequences of spinal cord injury
•Campaign for the best medical and social care for spinal cord injured people.

The Spinal Injuries Association are proud to be members of the Fundraising Standards Board.

About spinal cord injury
Every year in the UK over 1,000 people experience a spinal cord injury and there are an estimated 40,000 spinal cord injured people living in the UK.

Spinal cord injury is life changing. It can happen to anyone, at any time. Spinal cord injury often causes paralysis and can also affect many other aspects of a person’s health.
SIA supports spinal cord injured people and their families with practical and emotional support, advice and information, empowering them to lead full and independent lives.