



AN INVALUABLE SERVICE

Last year, SIA's Nurse Advocate Debbie Green supported Paula Prestidge, who was concerned about the lack of SCI awareness amongst the staff in her father's nursing home. Having listened to Paula's concerns, Debbie was able to provide her expertise to increase the SCI knowledge and understanding of the nursing staff.

PAULA PRESTIDGE – DAUGHTER OF DERRY TEW

I want to share my experience of using SIA's Nurse Advocate service – the professional and specialist advice of which I found invaluable in helping my father. Below is an overview of why we required the Nurse Advocate service and how grateful my father and I are for the help provided.

In 2003, my father, who was 60 years of age, had a tragic accident resulting in a complete SCI at level T6 with an acquired brain injury. Anyone who has a family member or someone close to them with an SCI will know only too well the devastating and life-changing impact it has on the individual and their family.

Due to the extent of my father's injuries, he resides in a nursing home requiring 24-hour nursing care. Initially, he was denied eligibility for NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) on numerous occasions, which I successfully appealed on his behalf. SIA's Continuing Healthcare Advice service was instrumental in offering help and advice concerning my appeals. The service also brought to our attention the issue of autonomic dysreflexia (AD). This complication of SCI, which results in the onset of extremely high blood pressure, is of particular relevance in light of my father's level of injury. He also experiences multiple AD triggers at any one time, which can cause an attack.

At his last annual review, I was left very concerned by the multidisciplinary team's assessment of AD and its conclusion that it was a low risk. They based this on the fact that my father had no previous episodes of AD. This, I believed, undermined the lifelong risk AD presents for my father and the need for nursing staff awareness of AD as a medical emergency.

I contacted SIA regarding my concerns, seeking advice as to how I could ensure that AD be incorporated into my father's care plan. I was informed of the new Nurse Advocate



Debbie Green at an SIA Study Day.

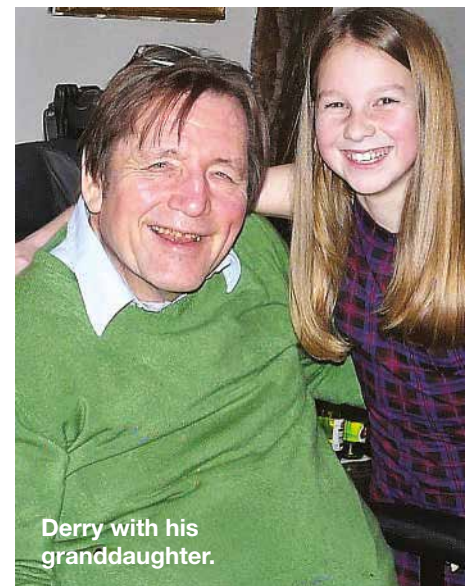
service and it was arranged for Debbie Green to contact me.

Debbie was fantastic. She is very friendly, professional and extremely knowledgeable in all aspects of SCI, having previously worked for more than 20 years at the National Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. I discussed my concerns, which primarily were around the many AD triggers my father experiences: pressure ulcers, urine and suprapubic infections, acute hospital admissions for pseudo-obstruction with varying degrees of distended abdomen, and ongoing bowel problems. Debbie very kindly offered to visit the nursing home to liaise with the nursing staff regarding AD awareness and his bowel management routine.

The nursing home manager and staff were receptive and grateful for Debbie's visit. The staff members stated that Debbie's visit was informative and provided them with a better understanding of AD and SCI in general.

My father gained confidence and reassurance that Debbie's visit had raised the staff's awareness of AD, and

his care plan was amended accordingly. My father and I are extremely grateful to Debbie and SIA for all the help, support and assistance the Nurse Advocate service has provided. I cannot recommend the service highly enough and the difference it really makes to individuals affected and living with SCI.



Derry with his granddaughter.