



ACQUIRED
BRAIN INJURY
IRELAND

STEP AHEAD PLUS

Get back to work or training
after brain injury >>

www.abiireland.ie



ciste na
gcuntas díomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund

 **pobal**
government supporting communities



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Vocational
Rehabilitation
Association

Introductions

Laura Reilly

Senior Occupational Therapist



Ciara Nolan

Employment & Training Liaison



Introduction

- Step Ahead Plus is a free vocational assessment and rehabilitation service operating under Acquired Brain Injury Ireland
- We are funded by Pobal and the Dormant Accounts Fund
- The service is for adults with an acquired brain injury (ABI) who want to return to work, training or education.

Background Information

What is an Acquired Brain Injury?

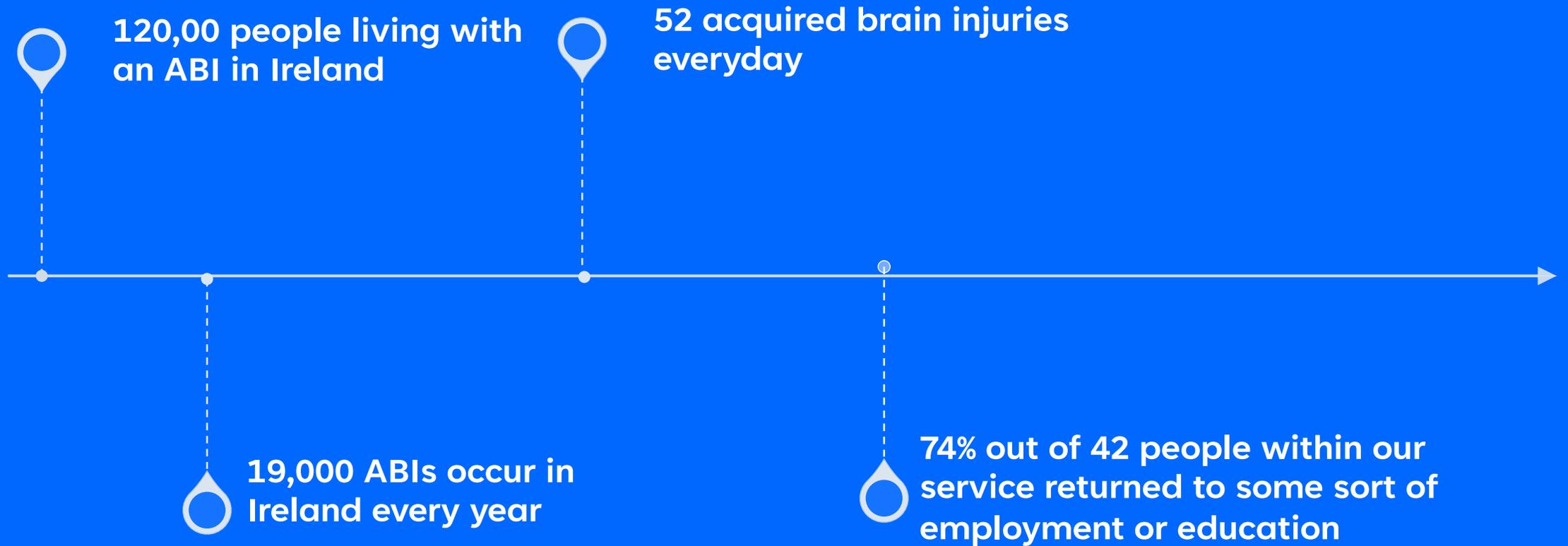
- An Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) is a brain injury that happens after birth, in childhood or adulthood
- Many things can cause brain injury, including stroke, road traffic accidents, falls, assaults, and brain tumours.

What is a vocational assessment?

- The vocational assessment helps to identify the strengths and challenges you may face returning to work or education after your brain injury.

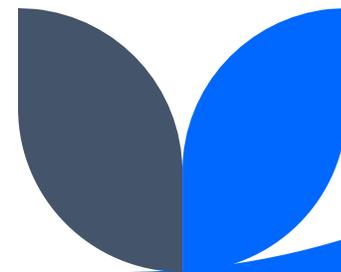


Statistics



Step Ahead's History

- Started in 2018 and was called Step Ahead
- Restricted geographic scope due to small staff team and travel required
- Limited age range of 18-29 year olds
- Assessment and rehabilitation carried out in-person
- Highlighted a nationwide demand and a demand with people over the age of 29
- Covid-19 pandemic allowed us to explore the option of working remotely.



Step Ahead Plus

We are now a nationwide service with clinics in Dublin and Cork

We deliver our service using a blended model of face-to-face specialist vocational assessment and remote vocational rehabilitation.



Referral Criteria

Have a primary diagnosis of an Acquired Brain Injury

Medically stable

Willing to engage in a vocational assessment with the aim of returning to work, training or education



Referral Process

Paper Referral: Please complete the paper referral form and post to:

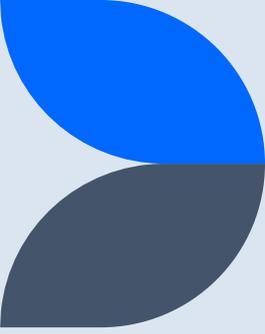
Katie O' Dwyer, Area Administrator, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, National Services Area 2, St Luke's Hospital, St Theresa's Wing, Western Road, Clonmel, Co Tipperary, E91PR83

You can also make a referral through our online portal which might save you some time
<https://www.abiireland.ie/services/i-have-a-brain-injury/step-ahead/>

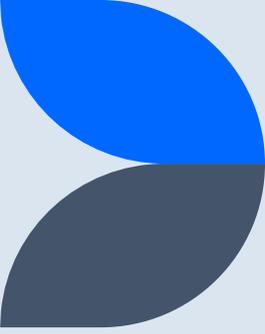
Please attach discharge summaries/OT or professional reports with the referral



Prioritisation



Vocational Assessment



1

Interview with
the Senior
Occupational
Therapist

2

Work Sample
Assessment

3

Job Demands
Evaluation

4

Further
standardized
assessment

5

Specialist
Vocational
Report

Pathways

Fast Track

- Participants with an employment role or education place to return to



New Track

- Participants who are exploring their next step in employment or education

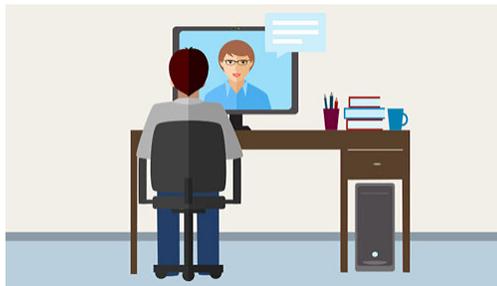


Rehab Options



1-2-1 Rehab

- Using telecommunications
- Delivered remotely using videocalls, emails and phone calls
- Nationwide
- Individual interventions guided by assessment

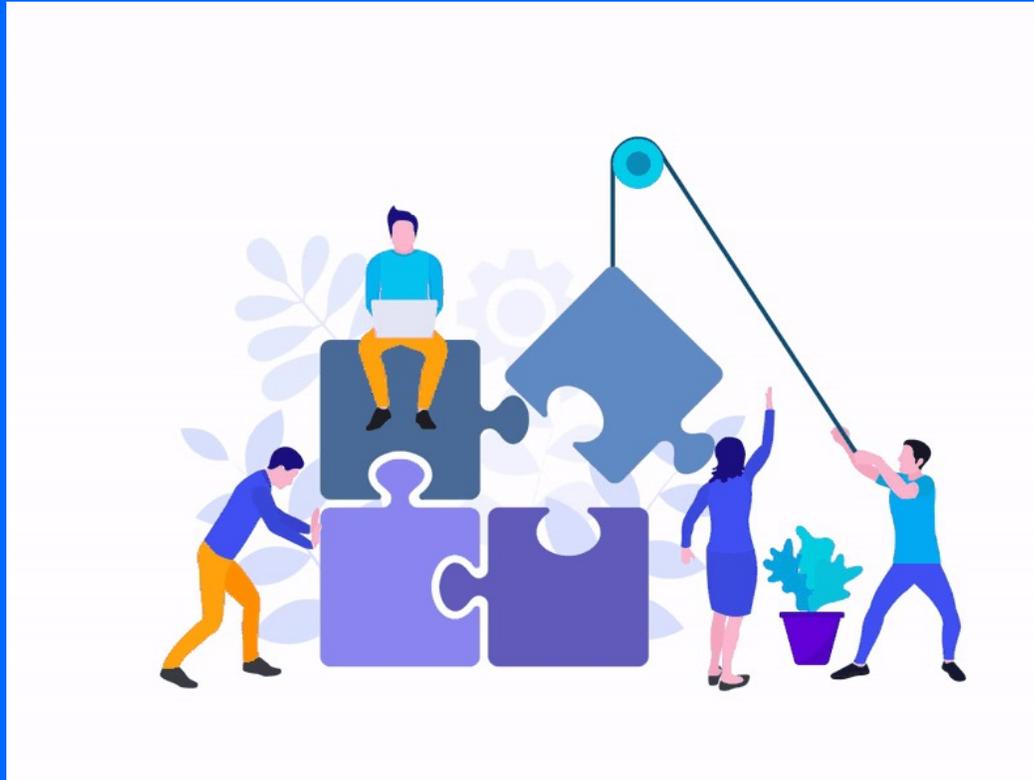


Group Rehab

- 6 week timeframe
- Delivered using videocall software
- Peer support
- Sharing strategies outside of an acute setting
- Symptom Management Groups
- Work Activation Groups

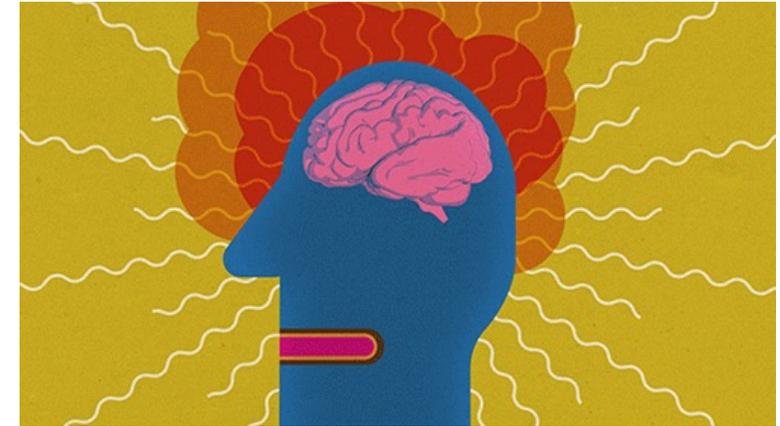


Interventions



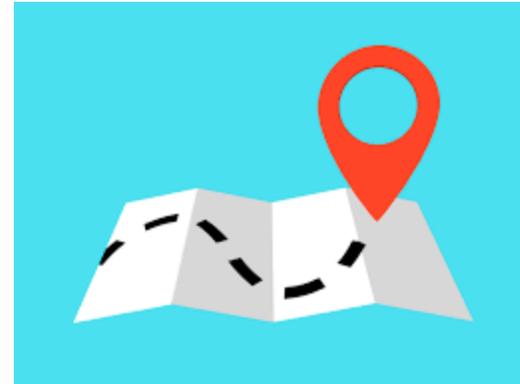
1. Foundational Rehabilitation

- Brain injury symptom education
- Exploring symptom management strategies



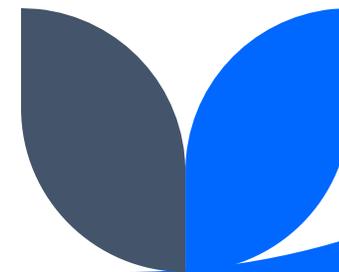
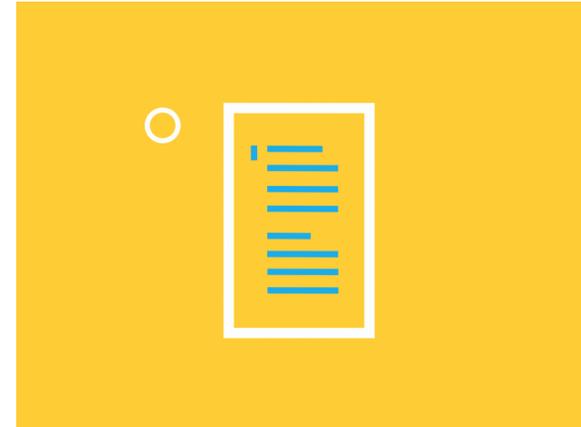
2. Employment Skills Training

- Career guidance
- Support with job searching
- CV prep
- Interview prep
- Work/education skills training
- Job Analysis
- Exploring volunteer work



3. Return to Work Planning

- Developing RTW plan
- Job analysis
- Work task simulations
- Exploring accommodations and disclosure
- Exploring Assistive Technology options
- Liaising with employers and educators



Case Studies – Fast Track



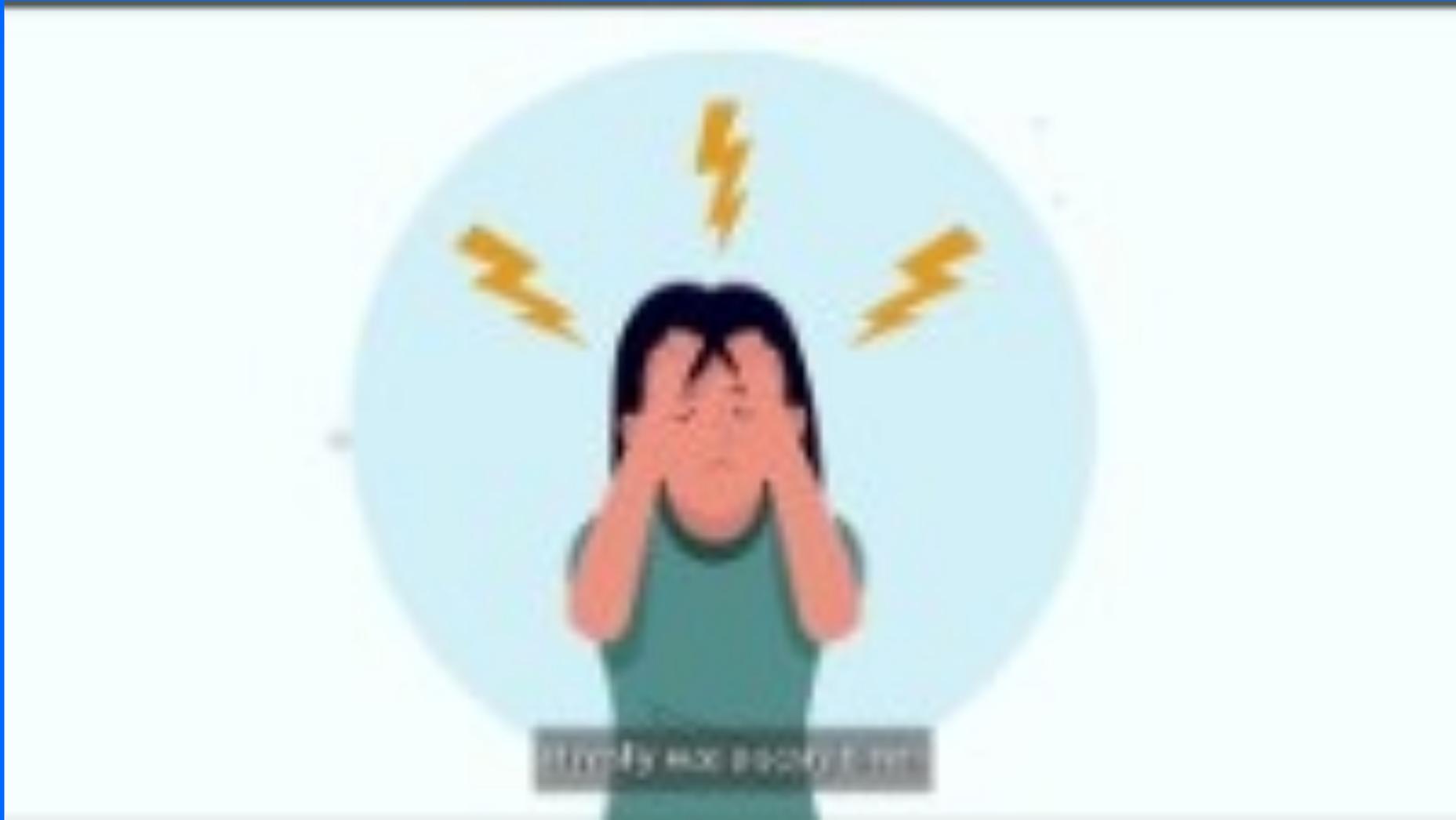
- TBI from assault in 2022
- Working as a Solicitor at the time
- On-sick leave and aimed to return to work in Sep 2022
- Engaged in assessment and was assigned 1-2-1 rehab session with ETL
- Difficulties with fatigue and deconditioning while on sick leave
- Worked on symptom management and employment activation simulations
- Return-to-work plan developed including accommodations
- Accommodations included a phased return to work and the option to work from home
- Returned to work in mid-October on a phased basis and working from home.



Case Studies – New Track



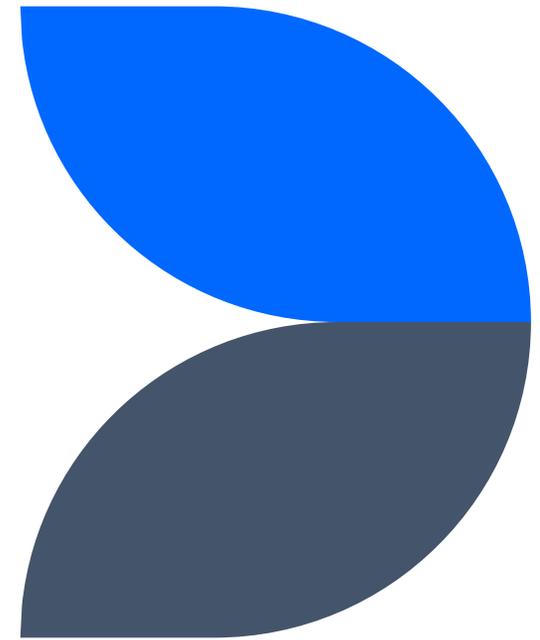
- ABI in 2020 from brain haemorrhage
- Qualified Primary School Teacher
- Engaged in assessment and was assigned 1-2-1 rehab sessions with ETL
- Difficulties with attention and fatigue management and unsure of next steps
- Explored job search strategy and completed career guidance sessions
- Explored disclosure and what accommodations might be needed
- Started volunteer work as adult language tutor in September
- Now working part-time as a tutor and minder for children as well as volunteering
- Planning to return to primary education after a few months of building up tolerance and skills.



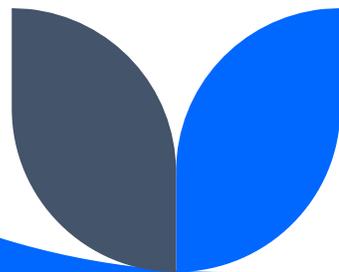


Employers

Creating new opportunities



Pathway for Employers



Benefits to Business

Access to a skilled
pool of workers

Fosters diversity
within your
business

Guidance on
accessible
recruitment
processes

Specialist led
team

Provision of
training



Testimonial

“

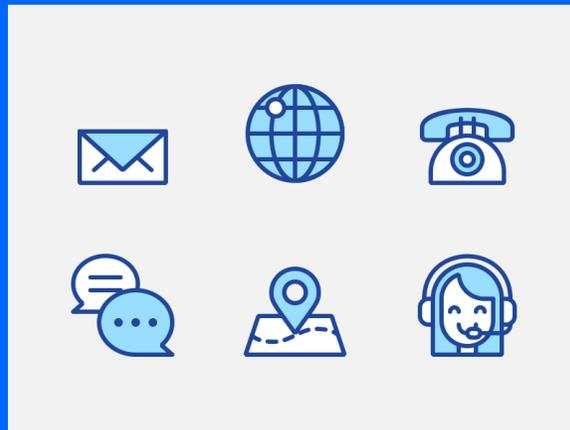
“The return-to-work plan prepared by the occupational therapist for Eugene was the most useful and comprehensive plan I have seen in terms of supporting a person to effectively return to work..... helped everyone manage expectations and successfully support Eugene to ramp back up to fulltime work.”

Torunn Dahl, Deloitte Ireland

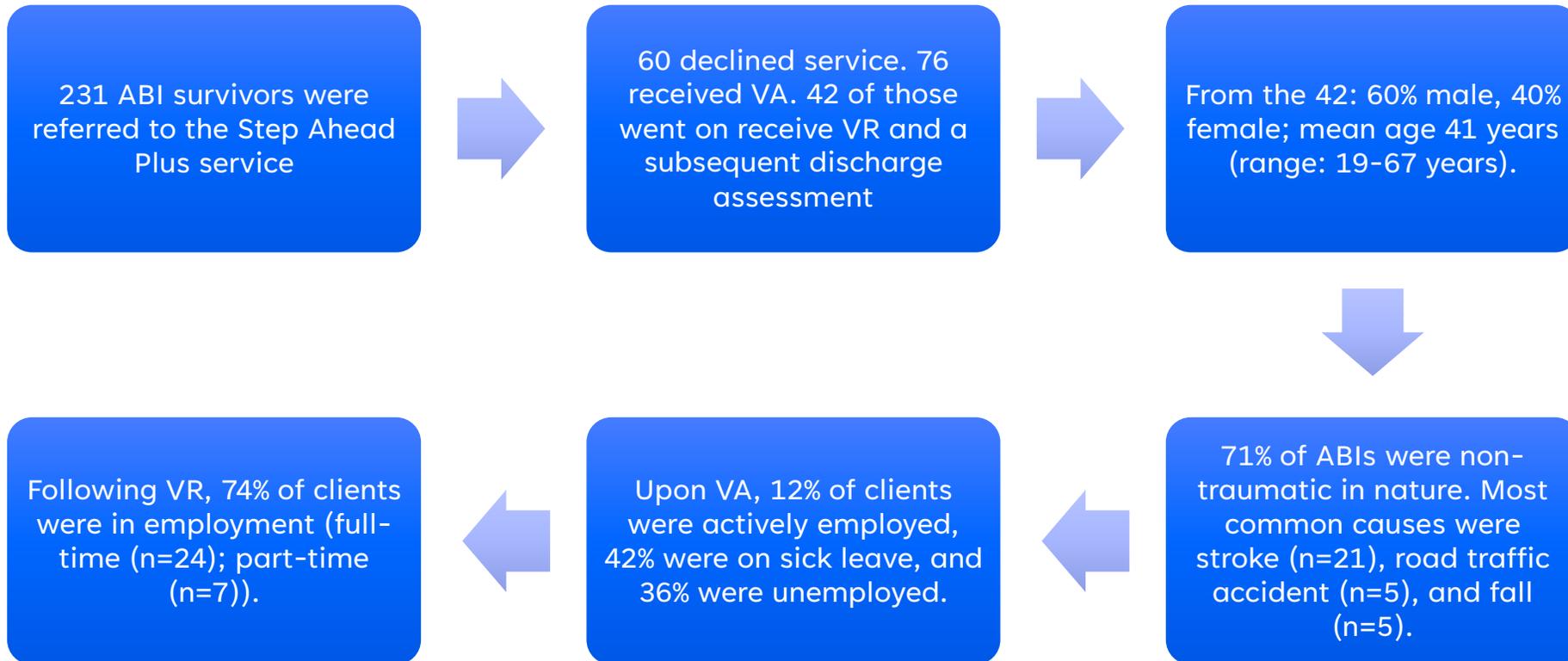
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For more information - Employers

If you are an **employer** and are interested in sourcing jobseekers, please contact Ciara at 086 440 1017 or cnolan@abiireland.ie



April 2021-June 2022



Learning Points

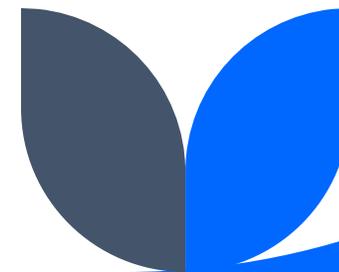
Hidden impact of a brain injury is profound

Some people will want to self-advocate rather than have a liaison

Risk-taking is an important part of brain injury rehabilitation

Vocational rehab requires commitment and dedication

Family and friends have a huge influence on the success of vocational rehabilitation



Future Directions



Further develop
groupwork programme



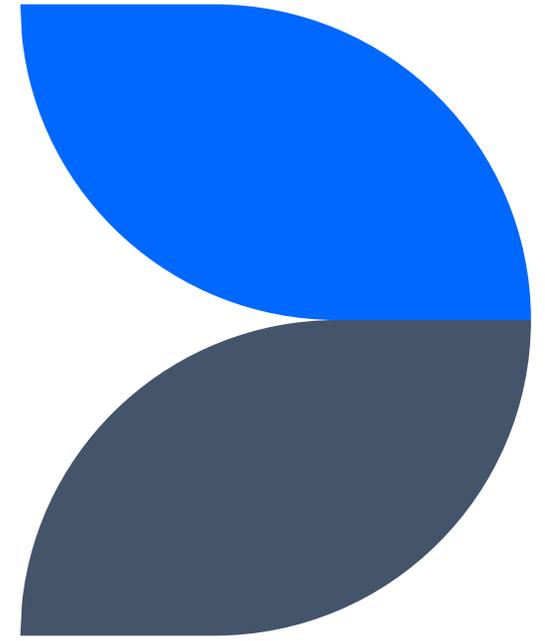
Contribute to VR body
of research



Build networks with
inclusive employers



Returning to work is a journey,
not a single step.





Any questions or thoughts?



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Thank you



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