

# PRIDE AWARDS 2017

**Category:** Public Affairs Campaign

**Company:** Pagoda Porter Novelli

**Entry title:** Head injury and reoffending

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**Brief and objectives:**

Working with BPS, we designed, implemented and managed a campaign to increase awareness about head injury within the Scottish Government and amongst key opinion leaders, and specifically, to secure political support for the following objectives:

- Funding a study on the practicality/ validity of screening prisoners for head injury in prison
- Establishing links with prisons' local brain injury and neuropsychology services which can offer a more detailed assessment for prisoners
- Adding a question about brain injury to NHS (Vision) interview during the reception process for new prisoners.

**Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:**

Society recognises those who offend and reoffend often live in chaotic circumstances and may be more likely to act impulsively. But most of us are not aware that brain injury increases the chances of risk taking behaviour and criminal activity. Research shows that approximately 6 in 10 (60%) of prisoners have suffered a head injury at some time. This lack of awareness means that offenders are not properly rehabilitated when they enter the criminal justice system.

Our research showed there had been no parliamentary discussion of head injury and reoffending in the previous two years and nothing from government on the need to improve assessment and rehabilitation in prisons. Against this background, we set out to create a cross-party consensus around the conclusions of the NPHN report and the urgent need to act on the objectives we identified.

In the build up to this campaign, we secured a Scottish Parliament Justice Committee inquiry into the issue. We also facilitated the creation of a Scottish Government working group (National Prisoner Healthcare Network - NPHN) into head injury and reoffending in prisons. Chaired by the BPS, this was tasked with identifying how to address the issue of brain injury amongst Scottish prisoners. Following publication of their report in July 2016, we targeted our campaign on the newly elected Scottish Parliament and Government.

**Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:**

Building on relationships established during the committee inquiry, we took a broader and deeper approach to political engagement. Hopeful of support from backbench MSPs we

nevertheless recognised that government had many other competing demands and might be slower to act.

So we built a coalition around the issue with third party champions: individuals and organisations with credibility in the health and justice sectors, including the Scottish Prison Service, the Child Brain Injury Trust, the Howard League, Includem, to put pressure on the Government to provide funding for a study, as recommended by the working group.

Campaigns of this kind can easily put all the blame at the government's door, leading to a defensive response. We avoided this by stressing that all organisations, including BPS, needed to work together to address the issue.

In crafting our messages, we were also conscious of the need to overcome potentially negative public perceptions; that offenders might use brain injury to justify their behaviour. So we focused on how preventative spending in this area would benefit the public through reduced offending. If brain injury is identified early on, people can be properly assessed, treated and diverted from crime.

We also

- Focused on face to face meetings with MSPs, as previous research had indicated that this was most effective
- Designed media activity to reinforce our messages and build momentum. This included securing coverage of the report in the Scotsman and a leader column in the Herald calling for the government to respond positively
- Coordinated third party representations to government.

### **Implementation of tactics:**

Following the publication of the report we coached BPS representatives to give evidence to Justice Committee and held ten one to one meetings with MSPs from all parties, including the Minister for Mental Health. They, in turn, asked 19 parliamentary questions on the government's response. We organised a successful parliamentary reception in November, attended by over 60 people, including six members of the Justice Committee and we organised a stakeholder letter which put pressure on the minister to respond positively.

#### Month Activity

July -E-briefing to Health and Justice committee MSPs on NPHN report

September -Private evidence session with Justice committee to explain NPHN report recommendations

-Story in the Scotsman

October -Meeting with Minister for Mental Health

November -Parliamentary reception on head injury with the Scottish Prison Service

January -Meeting with government officials and formal funding submission

February -Opinion piece, story and leader in the Herald on government failure to respond to NPHN report

-Letter to the Minister for Justice calling for research funding supported by Child Brain Injury Trust, Howard League, Includem, Brain and Spinal Injury Centre and Headway.

March -Response to Health Committee inquiry into prisoner health care and face to face briefing for Convener and committee clerk on gaps in prisoner healthcare

June -Positive decision on funding

### **Outline the distinct role and results of public affairs and lobbying :**

Although traumatic brain Injury (TBI) is particularly common among prisoners we recognised awareness of this was very low among decision makers- no other organisation was raising the issue and there had no government/parliamentary discussion on the matter for over 2 years.

As such we provided leadership and insight on an issue that had significant public policy implications with regards to the criminal justice system. We firstly highlighted the link between head injury and offending behaviour and then crucially, using the NPHN report, identified the measures necessary to address the low levels of neuro-rehabilitation in Scottish prisons. The combination of stakeholder support, media activity and cross party MSP advocacy was instrumental in demonstrating the political will behind our recommendations and in turn securing the research funding.

### **Measurement and evaluation:**

In June 2017, the Scottish Government awarded £67,000 to fund a study on

- the practicality/ validity of introducing screening tools for head injury in prisoners and
- establishing links with local brain injury and neuropsychology services

The Public Health Minister also confirmed her support for a question about brain injury being added to NHS (Vision) interview in prison reception, following a Parliamentary question we helped to place.

### **Budget and cost effectiveness:**

Campaign cost £9,900 fees (plus £1,500 for reception)

The objectives were met entirely and the activity increased awareness of the BPS with decision makers, strengthening their ability to address future policy issues.