Early Years Workshop

Simon Crosby - Chairman of the Board of Trustees

a child with

“Living with Hemiplegia”
Benjamin and I

Chairman of Hemihelp
Architect
Father of 9 year old right hemi

Early Years Workshop
What can you expect?
About HemiHelp

Over 20 years old

Founded by a group of parents to share information

National reach

12 staff (6.5FTE)

Trustees with a passion to help

Major information provider

Accredited with the information standard

Raising Awareness
**What is hemiplegia?**

This leaflet aims to provide an overview of hemiplegia, the impacts it may have on a child and the support available from HemiHelp.

Childhood hemiplegia (sometimes called hemiparesis) is a condition affecting one side of the body (Greek ‘hemi’ = half). We talk about a right or left hemiplegia, depending on the side affected. It is caused by damage to some part of the brain, which may happen before, during or soon after birth, when it is known as congenital hemiplegia, or later in childhood as a result of injury or illness, in which case it is called acquired hemiplegia. Generally, injury to the left side of the brain will cause a right hemiplegia and injury to the right side a left hemiplegia. Childhood hemiplegia is a relatively common condition, affecting up to one child in 1,000. About 80% of cases are congenital, and 20% acquired.

**How does hemiplegia occur?**

The causes of congenital hemiplegia are mostly unknown, and usually parents become aware of their child’s hemiplegia gradually during his or her infancy. There is a higher risk in premature babies, and it is unclear whether a difficult birth may be an occasional factor. In most cases, however, the damage occurs during pregnancy, and researchers have as yet been unable to isolate any contributory factors - in other words, it would appear to be mostly a matter of chance. Parents often worry that they may be somehow to blame, but this is not the case. Acquired hemiplegia results from damage to the brain during childhood. The most common cause is a stroke (when a bleed or blood clot damages part of the brain), but it can also result from an accident or infection.

**What are the effects of hemiplegia?**

It is difficult to generalise: hemiplegia affects each child differently. The most obvious result is a varying degree of weakness and lack of control in the affected side of the body, rather like the effects of a stroke. In one child this may be very obvious (he or she may have little use of one hand, may limp or have poor balance); in another child it will be so slight that it only shows when attempting specific physical activities.

**What can be done to help?**

Hemiplegia cannot be cured, but a lot can be done to minimise its effects. Your child, once diagnosed, will probably be referred to a Child Development Centre (CDC) or the children’s department of your local or regional hospital, where therapists will work with you to develop his or her abilities.

"Understanding hemiplegia and knowing how you can help your child achieve his or her potential is vital."

The immature brain is very flexible, and many of the functions of the damaged area can be taken over by undamaged parts of the brain. An adult who has a stroke loses very specific functions, depending on which part of the brain was affected. In contrast, which area of the brain was damaged and which side of the body is affected makes relatively little difference in children and young people with hemiplegia. Your child’s treatment will probably be based on a multidisciplinary approach, involving physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy where necessary.
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Helpline

“To provide a listening service run by people with direct experience of hemiplegia, giving support and information to anyone affected by hemiplegia.”
Family Backup

- To provide parents/carers with one to one practical and emotional support from a trained visitor with personal experience of disability or caring for a disabled child

- To help education staff better understand hemiplegia and support pupils with the condition

- To support navigation of services/financial support of benefit to people with hemiplegia

- To create links with other support organisations and encourage referrals to HemiHelp where appropriate
Regional Reach

“To facilitate local networks for families affected by hemiplegia, enabling them to share information and support each other.”
Facebook and Twitter and WWW

www.facebook.com/groups/5512952137/

https://twitter.com/#!/HemiHelp/

www.linkedin.com/company/hemihelp

www.hemihelp.org.uk

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