

Hannah has a date with PM

Six year old LA member, Hannah Olateju has been named as one of only 10 Children of Courage - an award which goes some way towards recognising the huge strength she shows every day. At the age of three, Hannah had meningitis, and septicaemia developed in her arms and legs. To save her life doctors had to amputate both legs above the knee and both arms below the elbow.

Hannah will attend the ceremony with her mum, Rebecca, on December 14. The day will start with a visit to 10 Downing Street to meet Prime Minister Tony Blair and his wife Cherie. From there they will go to Westminster Abbey for the ceremony before

moving on to the House of Lords for lunch. As a prize, winners are given the chance to have one dream come true. Rebecca said that Hannah dreams of being a ballet dancer and the award organisers have talked about arranging for her to dance with a Prima Ballerina.

Rebecca said the news changed the way she sees her daughter. "I just believe that what Hannah is doing is a normal thing. This makes me realise that what she is doing is more courageous than I thought. I am very excited, but it does feel a bit funny at the moment."

The Children of Courage award honours



some of Britain's bravest youngsters who have either performed acts of extraordinary heroism or who have endured pain and suffering as a result of disability or illness.



Diana Morgan

The events of 7 July left 20 survivors without limbs. Limbless Association Volunteers are called on at such times to meet new amputees and show them that they will walk again. Diana Morgan reports.

As news of the catastrophic tragedies of July 7th this year began to sink in, the fact that it was bombings and trains, I became aware that due to the nature of the injuries, there was a high probability that I would be asked at some point to help. The call came less than three weeks later, via the Limbless Association from the police family liaison services. Due to the type of injuries that bombings inflict, over 20 of the survivors are now amputees.

As a bi-lateral amputee (both my legs were amputated in a train accident)

Life after the Bombs

I have provided the most fundamental answer to many injured people over the years. It is the same question I asked when lying in hospital 15 years ago, when I could not imagine what it was like to walk on two false legs. For this reason I conduct nearly all volunteer visits in person. It is one thing to imagine walking on two prosthetics, it is another thing entirely to actually see someone walk into your hospital room, looking ok, enjoying a life well lived.

Aside from medical and legal matters, everything else can be discussed – from the emotional – the actual trauma of the event, any fears, relationships, parenting, sex, through to the practical - prosthetics, work, activities, sport, wheelchairs, clothing. The new amputee can ask the questions and the volunteer can provide encouragement, hints, tips, a hopeful moral support always borne out of their own personal experience, and crucially to let the new amputee know they are not alone in having to adjust to the sometimes substantial changes in their life.

The rehabilitation period for amputees, particularly for trauma patients is frequently a long and complex one. It can involve many months of recovery and healing and then learning to use prosthetics and coming to the gradual understanding that if prosthetics

are used, the rehabilitation although obviously not as intense, is life-long.

Another issue that can arise, particularly in the high profile cases, is in dealing with the possibility of media interest. It can be encouraging for others severely affected to see in public that not only is their trauma being acknowledged, but that they too will be ok. However, for those who choose to dally with the media circus, it can become addictive and they have to be hardy enough to acknowledge that as fast and hard as the media spotlight may hit, it is just as likely to melt away.

Formerly CEO of Limbless Association, Diana Morgan is now a freelance journalist.

Reprinted courtesy of Disability Now.

Contacts:

Limbless Association- 0208 788 1777, www.limbless-association.org. The Volunteer Visit service is not a professional counselling service. Amputees are matched by age, sex, level and type of amputation.

The Murray Foundation – 0141 580 8564, www.murray-foundation.org.uk

Counselling for amputees in Scotland
NHSdirect – 0845 4647, www.nhddirect.nhs.uk