

**Lesslie Young,
Speaking at the National Epilepsy Week Scottish Parliament Reception (2010)**

We are all here this evening as part of National Epilepsy Week. And although Epilepsy Scotland and all the other agencies work tirelessly all year round to raise awareness of the condition, the purpose of this week in particular is to raise the profile of people living with epilepsy in Scotland; to highlight the unpredictable changes in their lives as a result of seizure activity and the stigma that often comes their way from others, the fact that they regularly have unsought challenges that having epilepsy bring to them.

Tonight is also a night to say thank you and I would like to thank all of the MSP's who are here and who have committed their support to helping Epilepsy Scotland through the Cross-Party Group. The amount of support, help and guidance we get from everybody makes our job very much easier and I would like to thank everybody for that.

Our focus at the moment through Epilepsy Scotland is to look at the younger age group, 25 years and younger. This age group in particular experience challenges that are unique to that age group, but whose effects may well be experienced for a long time beyond the age of 25. The topic of transition that Shona (Robison, Public Health Minister) mentioned is one very good example. Educating people about epilepsy and having access to consistently good information is an integral part of reducing stigma and helping young people in accepting the condition that they have. I'm pleased therefore to introduce you as Shona said, to Brian and Farah, the two children's booklets that everybody has available at the tables there. These were put together as a result of support again from the Government but also from Spyfox and we would like to thank them too for their support.

I won't go into the details of the book as Shona has already done that, but I would like to say that they are very well written and beautifully illustrated and very well received far and wide. To quote just a few, as I'm never backward about blowing our own trumpet, "Just to let you know that the Brain booked arrived today and thank you very much, its gorgeous" from NCYPE. Children First commented that they loved them, "The tone is perfect and the art work is fab, well done!" A parent in London said, "Thanks for the great leaflet for my daughter!" So we've had a lot of feedback through Twitter and Facebook about the books.

I'm also very pleased this evening to introduce you to Rosie Gilmour. Rosie is a strong young woman who has decided, like Paul, not to let the fact that they have epilepsy stand in the way of what they want to do. So I don't want to steal any of Rosie's thunder and I will let her come and tell you her own story. But just to say that I'm absolutely delighted that she's the ambassador for Epilepsy Scotland. I'm sure that her message will help many young people who are learning to live with epilepsy and the challenges that it presents, so over to Rosie.