



Inclusive Education Toolkit



1. Understanding Inclusive Education

1.1 Introduction by Becky Hill, Back Up Trustee



“I am delighted to introduce this toolkit on behalf of Back Up. As **someone who has had first hand experience of returning to school after a spinal cord injury**, I fully understand the importance of this resource. As a proud trustee of Back Up, I am a firm advocate of the support that they provide to ensure students with spinal cord injury are fully included in every aspect of their school lives.

Including a spinally cord injured child or young person in mainstream school must be taken seriously. Following an injury, a child may be worried about how things will now be different at school, whether people will change how they treat them, if they will still be able to join in with activities and school trips as well as just being able to access the classrooms in the same way as their friends. It can be an extremely daunting and overwhelming experience.

“**I was 17 when I became spinal cord injured.** I was in the first year of sixth-form at school. Throughout my rehabilitation at the spinal unit it was really important

to me that I knew that I would return to my ‘normal life’. That meant going home, returning to school, completing my A-levels and going on to University. This was back in the early 90s and no support was available at that time for me or my school on how to return. Leaving hospital and coming to terms with living with a spinal cord injury was scary and dealing with practicalities like access at the school, was a new experience I had to cope with at a young age. **That’s why support from Back Up and resources such as this toolkit are vitally important to help all those impacted.** I know my school would have really benefitted from additional assistance and outside, expert help as everything was new to them too. We struggled through, with sheer determination and a pragmatic approach but it could have been made so much easier. I don’t know that lifting me up a flight of stairs each day would be acceptable today!

Children and young people affected by spinal cord injury still face many of these same apprehensions, fears and challenges when they return to school today. But with the help of Back Up school support and comprehensive resources like this toolkit, the aim is to make the experience of returning to school after spinal cord injury a less intimidating.

Alongside practical advice, considering how to treat a child or young person after spinal injury is just as significant but can often be overlooked. Communicating and taking time to recognise a child or young person’s perspective may seem obvious but is essential in ensuring their inclusion.

By reading testimonies directly from students in this toolkit, you will gain insight into their experiences and understand just how important it is to ensure inclusion is practiced every day.”

Becky Hill

Trustee