



back up

transforming lives after spinal cord injury

Mentoring Handbook

Mentoring service
supported and
accredited by:



back up

transforming lives after spinal cord injury

This booklet is designed to give you an overview of the Back Up mentoring service. Hopefully it will answer most of the questions you may have about how mentoring works and how it might help, but please do get in touch if you would like to ask us anything else.

At Back Up we understand that a spinal cord injury can be devastating, but believe it shouldn't stop anyone from getting the most out of life. Our accredited mentoring service links people with spinal cord injury or their family members with a trained mentor with relevant life experiences, so they can discuss the issues that matter to them. All the Back Up services, including wheelchair skills training, mentoring and rehabilitative activity courses, are delivered by people affected by spinal cord injury themselves. They can help to rebuild people's confidence and independence after spinal cord injury, as well as their family members too.

Mentoring team

Back Up
4 Knightley Walk
London
SW18 1GZ

Tel: 020 8875 1805
Email: admin@backuptrust.org.uk

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About mentoring

What is a mentor?

Sometimes it can be helpful to have someone who can listen and offer support and advice, based on their own experience. We have trained mentors who have direct experience of spinal cord injury, either personally or from the perspective of a family member. They all have at least two years of understanding of life after spinal cord injury and have all been trained on our two-day accredited training course.

Mentors are volunteers, not paid staff. They come from all walks of life and they want to offer their time to support others who are in situations that they can relate to.

What is the purpose of the mentoring service?

The aim of the mentoring service is to provide you with an opportunity to benefit from the experience of a mentor who's 'been there and done that' and who may well understand some of what you're feeling. We know that spinal cord injury can have a devastating impact, not just on the person with the injury, but on their family as too.

We offer trained mentors to support **people with spinal cord injury**, their **parents, partners, siblings, children** and **wider family and friends**. We also offer trained **youth mentors** for anyone **under 18**.



Who is mentoring for?

Anyone who has been affected by spinal cord injury can benefit from the mentoring service. Whether you have a spinal cord injury yourself or a member of your family does, whatever your experience, our mentors are here to support you.

Regardless of your age, background, injury level, or experience of spinal cord injury we can match you with someone to talk to. Whether you use a wheelchair or are able to walk, whether you're a teenage sister or an adult son, we can find you a mentor to relate to. Our volunteers all have a wide range of life experiences. Tell us about your goals and things that are important to you and we'll do our up most to find someone that you have things in common with, so you can share your experience of spinal cord injury.

“ Being able to talk to someone who ‘gets it’ and understands really did make a difference to me. Initially I felt quite isolated with all help directed to my partner. During those really difficult times my mentor helped me see that we could get through it because there are people that have been where we are and come out the other side. ”

Sarah*, partner mentee

*name has been changed

About mentoring

How does it work?

Mentoring tends to be by phone, but can happen over email or video calls such as zoom or Skype. Once you have been set up with your mentor calendar the Back Up office will send you a link to their calendar which shows their availability. You can then book, rearrange and cancel calls all through that link. From then the two of you can decide when and how often you would like to talk. Other people that have been mentored tell us it works best with regular contact, weekly or once a fortnight.

We will offer you up to 10 conversations with your mentor and this can be reviewed along the way. We would normally match someone based on level of injury as well as on that person's functional movement. For example, if you or your loved one has an incomplete injury we would try to find someone with a similar level of mobility.

You can speak to your mentor about anything you like and ask them about their experiences. This could include things like sex, relationships, emotions, employment, managing personal care (bladder & bowels), pain, or anything else related to spinal cord injury. Your mentor will assist you to work out what will help you move forward and use their experience to support you with adjusting to life after a spinal cord injury.

It's important to note that mentoring is not a mental health service nor can it replace counselling or psychological support. However if you do have a mental health condition, mentoring can run alongside any other treatments.

Dos and don'ts



DO



DON'T



- Feel free to ask any questions you like.
- Talk about any situation that you have concerns with and ask for advice or help.
- Make the most of the time you get with your mentor and ask about their experiences. If there is anything they feel uncomfortable with sharing they will let you know, and offer advice/guidance to where you'll be able to find answers.
- Listen to and respect your mentor, as they will with you.
- Let the mentoring team in the Back Up office know if you would like to end your mentoring calls sooner than the time period you originally agreed.
- Contact the mentoring team in the Back Up office if there is anything you find hard to speak to your mentor about, or you are unhappy with.
- Let your mentor down. If you need to change your arrangements use the link you were sent with plenty of notice, or please contact a member of the mentoring team in the Back Up office on 020 8875 1805 so they can let your mentor know well in advance.



Frequently asked questions

Is everything I say kept private between the mentor and myself?

Conversations are between you and your mentor and the information shared between you will be fed back to the mentoring team. This is so we can support them to be the best mentor they can be for you.

All conversations are confidential within Back Up, except where there is a concern about serious harm to you or someone else. In this case we may need to involve other services, such as your GP.

Can I have my mentor's telephone number?

No. We ask all mentors not to give out their personal contact details to mentees. If you would like to get in contact with your mentor, please call the Back Up office and ask to speak with a member of the mentoring team on 020 8875 1805. They will get in touch with your mentor and pass on any message or ask them to give you a call. If you just need to rearrange your mentoring call, you can do this through the booking link you will be given.

Can my mentor visit me at home?

No. We do not permit our mentors to visit people at home.

What happens at the end of the sessions with my mentor?

There may be mixed feelings when you've completed all your sessions with your mentor. You and your mentor might feel sad that the relationship is ending, which is quite normal.

It may be that there are still problems or difficulties that you face. We hope the sessions that you have with your mentor will allow you to feel more confident about dealing with those situations when the mentor is not there. Your mentor will discuss this with you towards the end of your sessions, along with how you can continue to get support after mentoring.

We hope that the end of mentoring will not be the end of your relationship with Back Up. There are many other opportunities to get involved which can offer you further support to help you meet your aspirations and reach your goals.



Testimonials



“ Julie was an excellent mentor - open, honest and willing to talk about anything! We hit it off straight away and she supported me going through the changes/adaptations I had to make due to my injury. She didn't sugar coat it, so I knew what to expect, but she helped me deal with it all face on. I gained so much more confidence and felt positive to face things when I knew Julie had already been there and done that. ”

“ She didn't sugar coat it, so I knew what to expect. ”

Testimonials

Amanda

“ Things have changed for me beyond anything imaginable. I was so ready to make changes in my life, but I had absolutely no idea where to start as there was so much I needed to change - my head was a confused jumbled mess. To be heard, understood, believed, and my thoughts and feelings valued by Jenny made me feel that my life really was worth living. ”

“ I feel 100% able to move on with my life in a whole new light and take on my challenges with much brighter thoughts and objectives. ”



“ I feel 100% able to move on with my life in a whole new light and take on my challenges with much brighter thoughts and objectives, in the knowledge that I am absolutely not alone with my experiences and daily emotional and physical challenges. ”

We always want to listen, learn and improve. If you have any compliments, comments or complaints about the mentoring service, please contact our Head of Services.

020 8875 1805

About our sponsor

“ Following my injury, I spoke with a number of law firms about a possible claim. Aspire Law were knowledgeable, straightforward and concise. In the early stages they obtained interim payments for me and my family, which gave us

space to breath. They also arranged private rehabilitation, accommodation and instructed a case manager. They managed all aspects of my claim whilst continuing to support me and my family on the ground. Sustaining a spinal cord injury changed my life forever but with the support of Aspire Law I look forward not backwards. ”

Back Up Mentoring is offered as a free service to anyone who needs it. The costs are covered by general donations and generous sponsorship from Aspire Law. Aspire Law is the only UK law firm working exclusively on spinal cord injury claims. Additionally, Aspire Law is the only UK law firm to donate 50% of its profit to charitable causes through its partner charity, Aspire.



“ We are delighted to be working with and sponsoring Back Up’s Mentoring Service. Ensuring support for the SCI community is a central tenet to what we do at Aspire Law. Being able to extend support for people with SCI beyond the hospital and into the community is fantastic and we are very pleased to support Back Up with this invaluable service. ”

Damian Horan, Legal Director Aspire Law



What happens next?

If you would like to take up mentoring or want more information, please contact:

E: mentoring@backuptrust.org.uk
T: 020 8875 1805
W: www.backuptrust.org.uk/mentoring

Back Up
4 Knightley Walk
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If you would like to become a mentor yourself please contact a member of the mentoring team as indicated, or go to our website and click on ‘support for you.’

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