



back[↑]up
transforming lives after spinal cord injury

Impact report 2019/20



Welcome



Where Back Up began and where we are now may look far apart - but our values and aspirations for people affected by spinal cord injury were the same in 1986 as they are today. People remain at the heart of what we do and we exist to transform the lives of everyone affected by spinal cord injury.

Across 2019/20 we've seen a number of new developments. As the only UK charity with dedicated services for children and young people with a spinal cord injury, we have been working closely with the NHS to champion the voices and experiences of children and young people, to ensure they receive the specialist care they deserve. We have also been doing more to support people with a spinal cord injury who can walk. Working in partnership with Aspire and Spinal Injuries Scotland, we've supported the delivery of The Queen Elizabeth National Spinal Injuries Unit in Glasgow's Stepping Stone project.

Neither of these would've been achieved without your generous and continued support. Whether you've attended an event, are a regular donor, a committed corporate partner or you've taken on a fundraising challenge for us, we want to say thank you. You've each played a part in helping us deliver life-changing services that build confidence and independence for people affected by spinal cord injury. Since I took over the role of CEO in February, I've been in awe of the support the Back Up community shows us. There's no doubt that you make us the charity that we are.

Sadly, we can't ignore the coronavirus pandemic that turned the world upside down this past year. Back in March, we had to make the unfortunate decision to pause our face-to-face services, for the safety of our volunteers and the people we support. This is why this year's impact report is slightly different - the figures tell the story of 2019/20 and our awe-inspiring stories from six individuals show how we are still delivering support with new services despite the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. They bring our real impact to life.

Abigail Lock | CEO

The impact of Back Up's work in 2019/20

Thank you for making our vital work possible.



Back Up supported 1658 people to adjust to life positively after sustaining a spinal cord injury in 2019/20.



778 of approximately 1000 people newly admitted to spinal centres plus 69 family members were newly registered to access our life changing services.



of adult participants on our life skills and activity courses achieved their personal aims.



people were supported by telephone on topics like relationships, travel, work and bladder management.



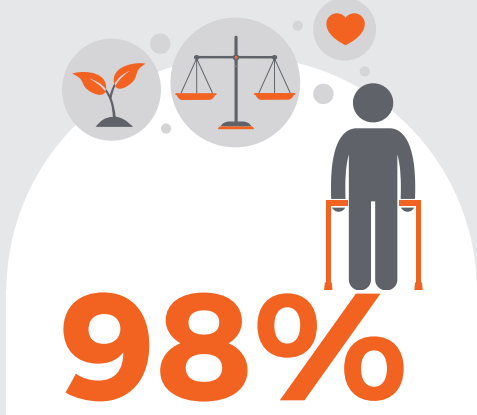
people were trained in wheelchair skills in hospital, with 90% learning new skills after attending a session.



relatives' days took place across six UK spinal cord injury centres.



people were matched with a trained mentor to help them make positive changes in their lives.



of people who were mentored increased in at least three positive coping strategies.



children and young people with a spinal cord injury were supported at different stages of their education, and **all of them** felt happier after receiving Back Up's support.



people were trained to use wheelchair skills to tackle real life obstacles outside of the hospital.



Terry

“ I didn’t know where to turn to after my injury and Back Up were there waiting for me. Talking with Back Up and finding that support has felt like a family coming out of the woodwork. ”

I was helping my parents with taking down their Christmas lights when I fell 10 feet. I remember feeling in total shock at the time, and in so much pain that it felt like a dream. I don’t remember much of the first two weeks in hospital, but I remember not knowing what was in place for my future.

I’m not afraid to say I struggled with adjusting to my injury in the first few months. I found it really hard to take in at first and I didn’t want to be around others in a similar situation.

I first met Back Up at Stanmore for a wheelchair skills session. I remember thinking that the staff were so friendly and it seemed like they brought a breath of fresh air to an otherwise sterile environment. This prompted me to get in touch about how they could support me.

I called up and was signposted to the mentoring service. I’ve just finished my 10 sessions and it was the best decision I have ever made. I don’t know what I would do without the support of my mentor. I have also joined the Back Up Lounge. I found it so helpful with both services to talk to others who understand being injured themselves. This truly helped me, and I hope in time to support others when they are newly injured.

Back Up have given me the tools to push forward with life. Talking with them and the support you receive - they really do make you feel like you are part of the family.

Lorraine

“ The personal value from Back Up, the empathy and understanding of being affected by spinal cord injury, is shown straight away from the charity. ”

My entire life changed this year. My son, Christopher, was driving home when a pickup truck crashed into him head on. Christopher was in intensive care for eight weeks and was unable to do much rehabilitation until after this period. Furthermore, with the Covid-19 pandemic we were unable to visit him and so relied on FaceTime to offer our support.

There are no real words to describe how the injury has impacted everyone's lives. It has changed our family's entire priorities. However, this has also been a positive experience - we are more supportive of each other, and if possible, have bonded even more as a family.

As a parent you are forever at the top of the pyramid – always there to support others, sometimes to the detriment of yourself. I knew I needed the right support to help my family. I was doing a Google search and came across Back Up. I called the team not sure what support I needed, but they took the time to listen and suggested family mentoring.

I found the entire process refreshing. My mentor was reassuring with my problems, mentioning that there would be difficult times ahead, but a full life can still be lived. I now recognise that Christopher can still have goals, but they are just going to be different from what he initially thought and that's ok. We are still at the beginning of the journey, but mentoring has given me the confidence to speak up and sort out any problems we may have ahead so that Christopher gets the right support.

I know it will be ok moving forward because Back Up are there to support whenever needed.





Tess

“ Back Up have made my life possible. Without my wheelchair skills I wouldn't have had the confidence I do now. ”

I was taking a shortcut home after school when I sustained my injury. I fell down a flight of uneven concrete steps close to my parents' house.

I was treated in a general hospital, rather than a spinal centre because I have additional health problems. It was difficult initially to diagnose the full extent of my injury as there were multiple traumas, but no clear fractures. The waiting made having an injury more difficult to adjust to initially.

Unfortunately I missed out on the specialist rehabilitation offered in spinal centres and talking to others in a similar situation. This was really difficult, but I was determined to adjust positively to my injury.

I first met Back Up by reference from the Spinal Injuries Association. They gave me a leaflet on wheelchair skills. I waited until I was out of hospital and contacted Rockwood spinal centre to join a session. I also visited Back Up's website and read about their courses. I knew the skiing course in Sweden would be the one for me.

The course was amazing! I was an avid skier before my injury, and the course showed me that I could ski again, just in a different way. When I was first injured I found I couldn't do anything on my own and there was a time I thought I never would. This new found confidence has allowed me to go back to university to study medical sciences. I am thinking what my next career step will be.

Organisations like Back Up challenge the perceptions of what's possible. They support everyone who needs it and nothing is ever too much. Back Up have given me the opportunity to still get out and about and I am so grateful.

Remmond

“Mentoring made me understand so much about my injury. It showed me that there are loads of people in my position.”

There wasn't one single incident that caused my spinal cord injury that I recall. My condition got worse over time. At one point I started limping. Eventually after a full back scan in hospital they discovered a protrusion on the T5/T6 level of my spine.

After the surgery to decompress my spinal cord I was a bit naïve. I thought I would be back on my feet after a few weeks. It was only when I started rehab that I learned I may never walk unaided again. At this point my mentality was to do my utmost to live in this new situation.

My physiotherapist gave me a leaflet about Back Up's services. At the time I didn't know anything about spinal cord injury, but I was determined to build myself up again. I got in touch with Sophie at Back Up who told me all about the mentoring service, and said she found me a perfect match. I was paired up with my mentor, Kevin, and we instantly hit it off. Kevin showed me that there is a lot I can do with my life, even with a spinal cord injury. He answered all the questions I had - covering topics like sleep, relationships and work.

Mentoring made me understand so much about my injury. I was the only person on my ward with a spinal cord injury, I was mainly with stroke and brain injury patients, so mentoring proved there are other people like me out there living well.

I've recently reached out again to Sophie to find out how I can get involved with Back Up. I want to give back in the future by volunteering.





Jack

“ You shouldn’t see yourself as a different person, because you aren’t. It is possible to just get on with things and carry on. ”

I led quite an ordinary life before my injury. I was your typical first year university student; jog, lectures, essays, more sports, night out - rinse and repeat. Life dramatically changed when I was involved in a car crash that resulted in a C5 complete injury.

I was left paralysed from the chest down with no tricep or hand movement. I wasn’t aware of the trauma at the time. Learning the enormity of my injury was devastating and I was in so much pain. I wasn’t sure how to carry on.

I found my rehab very frustrating. I wanted to get on with things so badly, but found a lot of the activities were focused for people with more movement. I first heard of Back Up from two nurses who had been buddies on a previous ski course. Knowing my interest in sport, they recommended I look into it.

Going on the Sweden course was one of the best things I have ever done. The buddies on the course pushed you to do as much for yourself as possible, such as feeding yourself and I was glad for that, because I was starting to feel comfortable. I didn’t know I could do these things and I took the skills home with me.

Back Up gives people hope and a sense of community that is otherwise not always known. I now feel physically comfortable in my body and I can push myself to do new things. It took some time, but talking and learning from others in a similar situation helped massively. I want other people with a spinal cord injury to know that a full life can be possible.

Hannah

“ Back Up and the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) showed me that there are other people like me who can help along the way. ”

I was very active prior to my injury. I used to play badminton, went bouldering and rock climbing, and was part of a trampoline academy. I sustained my injury in a trampolining accident in 2018 while training. Going from being active to suddenly feeling like I couldn't do anything was hard. At first I was totally unable to move, but I regained my mobility eventually and I now use a wheelchair part time. That's how I first met Back Up, at a wheelchair skills training session.

After learning wheelchair skills, Back Up's Under 18s Services Manager, Ella got in touch. It was really useful to hear how Ella had adapted. Before my accident I didn't know much about spinal cord injury, so meeting people in a similar situation really opened my eyes. I wanted to know more young people with a spinal cord injury, so I decided to become part of Back Up's YAG.

The YAG comes up with ideas to help other young people affected by spinal cord injury. Usually we meet in person, but due to Covid this year we held a zoom call instead. We talked about how we could promote Back Up to the people who need it, gave feedback on the charity's under-18s services, and came up with ideas for future courses.

It's so important to inspire other young people and get them involved. It shows them that they aren't the only ones in their situation. I am a lot stronger than when I was first injured. I can see the opportunities in front of me. Now I play table tennis and wheelchair basketball. It's my ambition to get on a team one day!





Plans for the future

“You can’t put a price on the Back Up mentoring service as you can’t buy the confidence and reassurance it provides you. ”

We work hard to increase the number of people we support each year, but we know that there are many more who could benefit from our services. This has encouraged us to re-evaluate how, with limited resources, we can support a much larger spinal cord injured population and focus on those in greatest need. This provided the basis for our new five-year strategy which we looked to implement throughout 2020/21.

Unfortunately, coronavirus has had a direct impact on the launch of the strategy this year, but we are still moving towards its aims and objectives whilst also developing new service offerings digitally that will endure following the end of the pandemic. These digital services enable us to reach many more people, connecting them to others affected by spinal cord injury.

Furthermore, through closer collaboration with the NHS in England, we are laying the groundwork to be able to integrate our services into the spinal cord injury rehabilitation process in order to offer our services routinely to those that need it most.

The difference our volunteers make

Our vital work is made possible by a passionate army of volunteers, whose contribution is felt at all levels of the charity. Back Up was founded by volunteers and, to this day, volunteering remains at the heart of everything we do. **Last year, we estimate that our volunteers contributed the following hours to our work:**



Volunteers on our Back Up To Work course gave **160 hours** to help people work towards their employment goals.



Volunteer mentors spent **1350 hours** to help people to make positive changes in their lives.



Office volunteers gave **1176 hours** of their time to provide fundraising and administrative support.



Our course volunteers amassed **5836 hours** as group leaders, buddies, nurses and personal assistants (PAs).



U18s volunteers spent **351 hours** shaping our services and supporting other children and young people with skills and advice.

In total, we estimate that our amazing volunteers contributed around **14,195 hours** to our work this year! We want to say a massive thank you to each and every one of you for all you do to support Back Up.



Our volunteers spent **999 hours** delivering wheelchair skills and patient education sessions.



Our family volunteers gave us **204 hours** of their time to support family members of people with a spinal cord injury.



Back Up's mentor trainers committed **128 hours** to deliver comprehensive training and guidance to mentors.



Our fundraising volunteers gave **1240 hours** planning our special events, raising money at bucket collections and supporting our work.



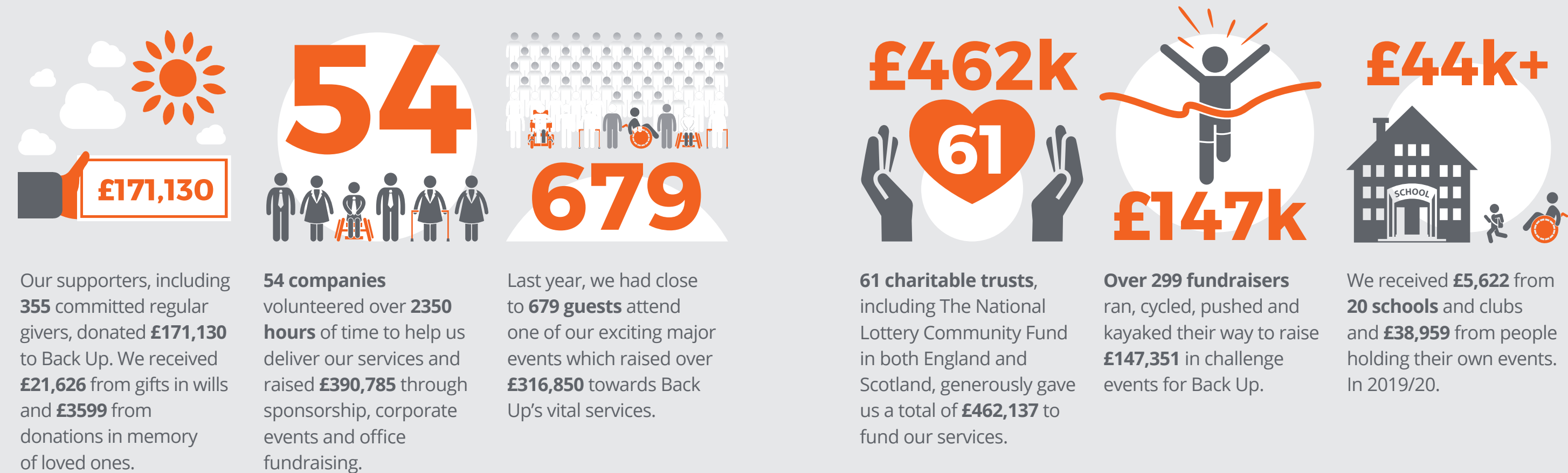
Our education advocates gave **166 hours** of their time to support children and young people with a spinal cord injury.



Our trustees dedicated **750 hours** to govern Back Up and shape the charity's future.

How we raised our money

As Back Up receives no government funding, we rely entirely on our fantastic supporters, fundraisers, corporate sponsors and charitable trusts to make our work possible. We simply couldn't do it without them.

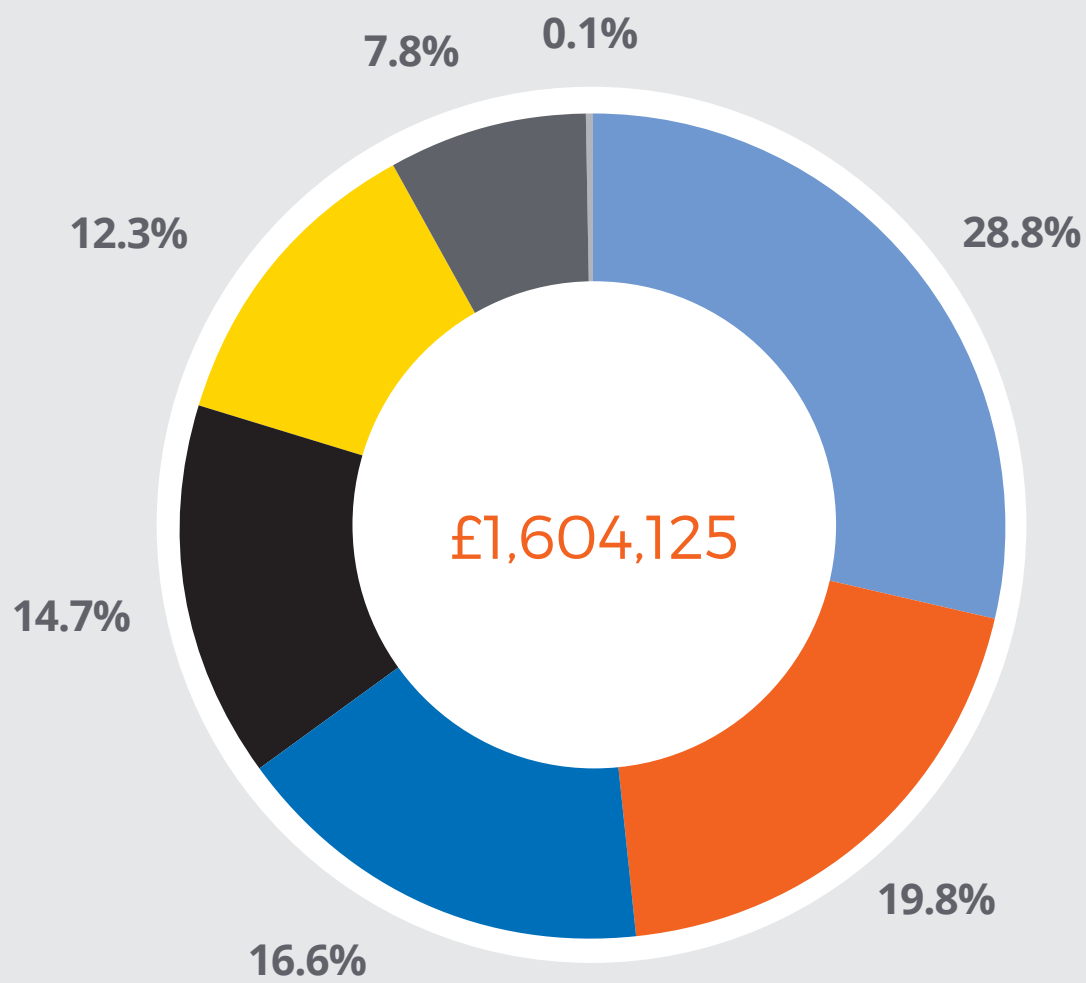


In 2019/20, we raised an incredible £1,604,126.

Every donation counts – big or small. To all the individuals and corporations who have contributed to Back Up, we would like to say a massive thank you on behalf of all those you have helped this year.

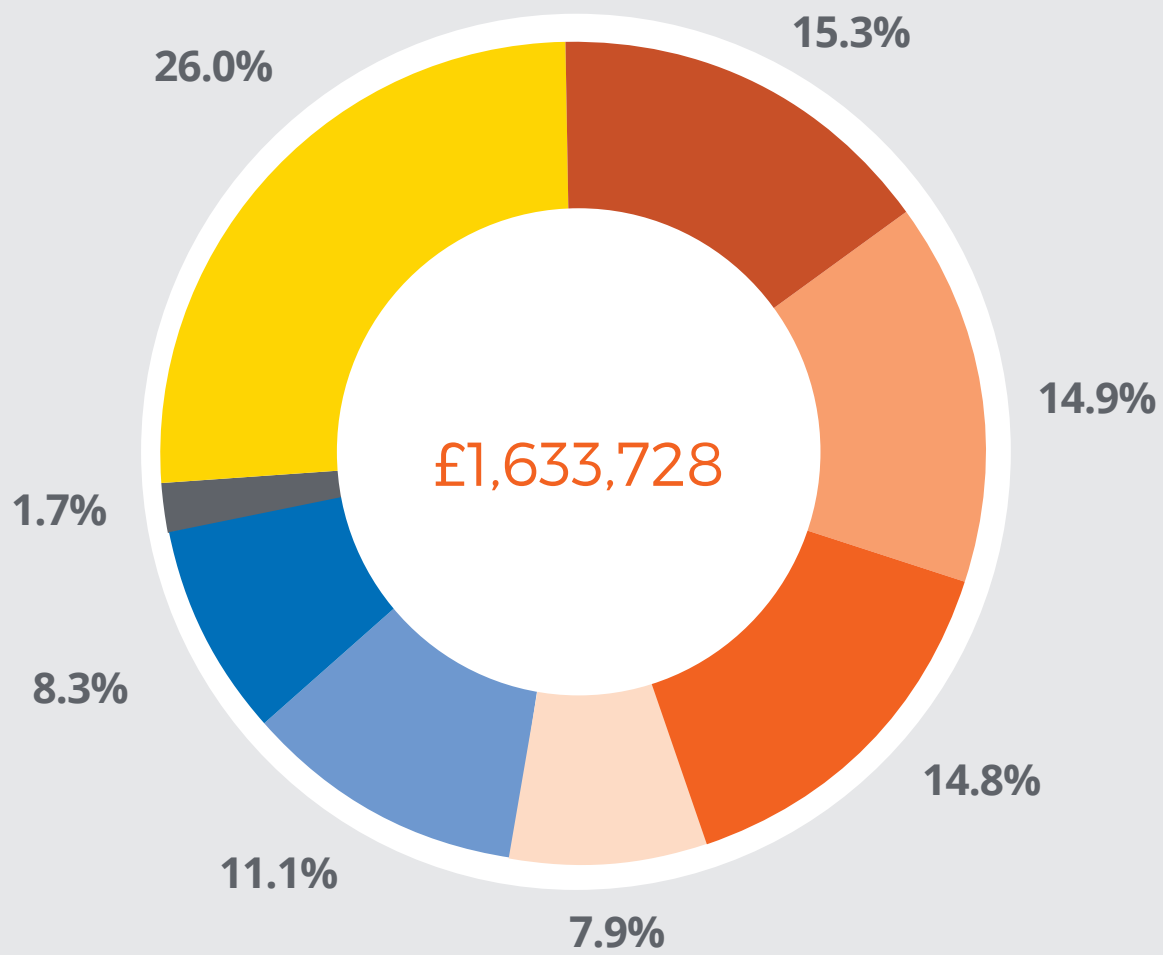


Where our money came from



- Trusts **£462,137**
- Fundraising events **£317,701**
- Donations **£265,705**
- Community & Challenge **£236,070**
- Corporate **£196,585**
- Trading including sponsorship **£124,393**
- Investment **£1,534**

Where our money went



- Outreach and Support **£250,106**
- Courses **£243,541**
- Mentoring **£241,623**
- Under 18s **£128,588**
- Awareness **£136,290**
- Fundraising **£424,821**
- Trading & events **£181,640**
- Governance **£27,119**

Although the majority of our income goes directly to our services, we wouldn't be able to function as a charity without spending on fundraising and governance to ensure the sustainability of our services for future generations.

Acknowledgments

We value the support of every individual and organisation who supports us, but we'd like to mention a few who have gone over and beyond this year to support us.

Trustees

Helen Cooke
Paul Davidson
(July 2019 – Resigned in March 2020)
Mona Dhanjal
(From 24 July 2019 - Present)
David Fraser
Rebecca Hill
(Chair 2013- July 2019)
Anne Luttman-Johnson
Martine Petetin
Claire Pimm
(Resigned in July 2019)
Dr Clair Pollard
Tom Roberts
(From 24 July 2019 – Present)
Richard Smith
(Hon Treasurer)
Ben Sneesby
Rebecca Stevenson
Joanna Wright
(Chair July 2019 – Present)

Patrons

Konrad Bartelski
Martin Bell
Barbara Broccoli
Eric Lanlard
Sophie Morgan
Mike Nemesvary
Valerie Singleton

Individuals

Jeremy Adam
John & Sue Adams
Julie Allen
Richard Baldwin-Hay
Vicki & Martyn Beckwith
Paul Brand
Nicholas Byrne
Catherine Calder
Lord Charles Hemphill
Juliette Clark
Olivia Colman
Debbie Cragg
James Dickinson
Robin Dollar
Ian Draper
Andrew Eastcroft
Jean Egbunike
David Fransen
David Fraser
Edwin Glasgow
Charlotte Grobien
Saad & Anna Hadi
Ian Hetherington
Peter Hills
Kim Hutton
Daniella James-Fancy
Charlotte Johnson
John & Lisa Kenna
Karen & David Kremer
Sue Loney

Chris Marchant
Janice Marlton
Kate Marsh
Nick Martin
Jocelyn Matthews
Nick Millar
John Mitcheson
Susanna Morgan-Williams
John & Carol Morgan
Matt Newman
Paul Newrick
Charlotte Noonan
Sarah Oughton
Stewart Parvin
Lauren Pethick
Clair Pollard
Matthew Rees
Jane Rogan
Margot & Nigel Russell
David Seal
Nigel Shanahan
Jo Sheasby
Kara Smith
Mark Somerset
Claire Streatfield
Merryn Thomas
Susie Turnbull
Anne Urban
Patrick Woodall
Jo Wright
Chris Yeates

Companies and Charities

Active Care Group
Aspire
Aspire Law
Bank of Montreal
Big Yellow Storage
Clarasys
CliniMed Ltd
Coloplast
Cyclone Mobility
Eversholt Rail
Fittleworth
GRX Life
Hayman's Gin
Hollister
Irwin Mitchell
ITC Global Security Limited
JMW
Leigh Day
Lynn Murray & Co
Origin Care
RGK Wheelchairs
RSA
Russell Cooke
Savills
Shoosmiths
Spinal Injuries Association
Spinal Injuries Scotland
Stewart Investors
Stewarts Law
Taylor Rose TTKW
Wellspect

Trusts and Foundations




We would also like to thank all charitable trusts who helped fund our life-changing services this year, including:

Alice Ellen Cooper Dean Charitable Foundation
BBC Children In Need
The National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities
Bruce Wake Charitable Trust
Edith Lilian Harrison 2000 Foundation
Garfield Weston Foundation
Henry Smith Charity
James Tudor Foundation
John Horniman's Children's Trust
Medicash Foundation
Pom Charitable Trust
RS Macdonald Charitable Trust
Rothschild Foundation
Ryvoan Trust
Sovereign Health Care
Shanly Foundation
St James's Place Foundation
William Allen Young Charitable Trust
29th May 1961 Charitable Trust



Back Up
4 Knightley Walk
London
SW18 1GZ

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

-  [backuptrust](#)
-  [@backuptrust](#)
-  [@backuptrust](#)

We'd like to thank our amazing photographer Chris Marchant for providing the majority of the photographic images used in this impact report, as well as Tess Edwards, Jack Mannings, Lorraine Magee and Konrad Bartelski, for providing additional images.

