

back up

Transform

For everyone affected by spinal cord injury

Spring 2017

“Back Up
Gave me my
Confidence
Back”

INSIDE:

LATEST NEWS

**FAMILY
MENTORING**

**NEW WHEELCHAIR
USER RESEARCH**

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WHO IS BACK UP FOR?

Back Up is for everyone affected by spinal cord injury and their family members, regardless of age, level of injury or background. Our services aim to build confidence and independence and include:

- Mentoring
- Wheelchair skills training
- Residential activity courses
- Support to make sure children are included at school
- Support with going back to work

We understand a spinal cord injury can be devastating, but we believe it shouldn't prevent anyone from getting the most out of life.

To find out more call us on **020 8875 1805** or visit **backuptrust.org.uk**



The Back-Up Trust, Jessica House, 191 Wandsworth High Street, London SW18 4LS.
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Welcome to our Spring 2017 edition of Transform. This is my last foreword for Transform and I must say, it remains an inspiring read. On page five we celebrate Julie Hill's richly deserved British Citizen Award for volunteering. Rosie's story on page eight highlights the confidence she gained on Back Up's courses - and how it inspired her to want to give back.

Although I am sad about leaving Back Up after 12 years, I too will be able to become a volunteer and stay a part of the Back Up family that continues to make a huge impact on people's lives. I wanted to say thank you to all our wonderful volunteers, staff, supporters, donors and fundraisers. I'll be forever thankful for the care, support and challenge you have all shown along the way. Please keep up the great work - it's needed more than ever.

There is another move in the summer: Back Up will be moving offices - just down the road in Wandsworth - in late June. Look out for an update on our new address.

Louise

Chief Executive, Back Up
louise@backuptrust.org.uk
or **020 8875 1805**.

LATEST NEWS

Back Up Fest coming soon



On July 8 2017, we will hold our first ever Back Up festival. This event is the brainchild of our Youth Advisory Group. They came up with the idea of Back Up Fest as a social occasion where people affected by spinal cord injury as well as friends, families and the general public can come together to celebrate and promote the work of Back Up - as well as have a lot of fun!

The day itself will showcase different bands to suit all age groups, fun games and stalls.

Everyone is welcome. To find out more about Back Up Fest, please email Kat (Katherine@backuptrust.org.uk) or call her on 020 8875 6749.

Wheelchair Skills Extra

Many of you will be aware of our Join the Dots wheelchair skills sessions, which are held in town centres near many of the spinal centres in the UK. These community based sessions are an expansion of the original wheelchair skills programmes which we have been running since 2001.



We've decided to change the name of these sessions to Wheelchair Skills Extra. This is to make it clear what these sessions offer and how they follow on from our sessions in spinal units, putting those skills learnt on the ward into practise in daily life.

We know that getting around as a wheelchair user can be frightening. Wheelchair Skills Extra gives people the independence they need to get back to living their life to the full. These sessions are kindly sponsored by Gerald Simonds and Irwin Mitchell.

Back Up Ball 2017: the countdown begins



The events team is already hard at work planning this year's Back Up Ball, an amazing accessible party and one of the highlights of the Back Up calendar.

This year's ball will be held on November 18 2017 at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel. Early bird tickets at the reduced price of £65 are available from www.backupteam.org.uk/back-up-ball. Catch up with friends old and new whilst celebrating and raising funds for our vital work

Get in early to secure your place!

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER RECEIVES NATIONAL HONOUR



Julie Hill receives British Citizen Award for 20 years' voluntary service.

Back Up volunteer and former Chair of Trustees, Julie Hill, has received a British Citizen Award (BCA) for her outstanding contribution to Back Up's services.

Julie was one of 29 medallists, all of whom were honoured at a prestigious ceremony on January 26 at the Palace of Westminster. She was presented with her award by BCA Patron and TV personality, Bradley Walsh. Speaking about her nomination, Julie said:

“Back Up literally gave me my life back after my injury! They taught me about what I could do as opposed to what I felt I no longer could. The impact that their work had, not just on me but the ripple effect on my family and friends, was immeasurable. To be able to give back and share my experiences has been very rewarding. I feel very humbled to receive this award.”

Julie, aged 55, had her spinal cord injury in 1990. It was caused by a car accident which left her permanently paralysed from the waist down. The turning point for Julie was when she attended

one of Back Up's residential activity courses, trying out abseiling and skiing for the first time in her life. This inspired Julie to start volunteering.

She is now one of our longest-serving volunteers and has been involved in all aspects of our work from being a group leader on our courses, right up to being Chair of Trustees for five years. She is also a Back Up mentor and has used her own personal experience to support over twenty people with a spinal cord injury, offering them advice to move forwards with their lives. On top of this she trained as a schools advocate last year. She keeps finding new ways to get involved!

Julie was nominated for the award by Back Up Courses Administrator, Karim Dafallah, who said: “Many people feel their life is over after a devastating spinal cord injury, but the work that Julie does on our rehabilitative courses empowers people to live as full a life as possible. She is a very special volunteer and we're so pleased that her amazing contribution to our work has earned her a British Citizen Award.”

NEW NATIONAL GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH A SPINAL CORD INJURY INTO WORK

Working after spinal cord injury may seem a pipe dream to a newly injured person. But at Back Up, we believe that a spinal cord injury of any kind needn't prevent someone from having a job. Providing support back to work is a big part of what we do, and we see great results from our work in this area. There are clear benefits to going back to work which can be easy to overlook: the chance to socialise, the sense of self-worth and purpose which it provides. There is strong evidence to suggest that working benefits our physical and mental health too. Sometimes people can go back to former careers after spinal cord injury - but sometimes they change careers, and they may need support for that.

Vocational rehabilitation - supporting someone back to work after an injury - really begins in the clinic or hospital setting. Currently only a third of people who have a spinal cord injury are getting back to work. This figure only includes people who receive specialist spinal rehabilitation - the real number is probably far lower. Stef Cormack, Back Up's Head of People Development, was asked to chair a review of best practice and produce new guidelines on vocational rehabilitation which will launch this year. This was in Stef's role as a committee member of the Multidisciplinary Association for Spinal Cord Injury Professionals (MASCIP).

Earlier this year, Stef told a conference organised by Irwin Mitchell and the Vocational Rehabilitation Association (VRA), how these new guidelines will help people working on spinal cord injury rehabilitation plans. Stef says:

“When we talked to people working in the spinal centres, we found that many fear it is too early to talk to people about work (after an injury) - but actually there is strong evidence to suggest that early interventions are really important for encouraging people to think positively about work.”

Stef worked with a wide range of specialists across the UK and Ireland to develop the guidelines. What has become clear is how important it is to work to keep people's minds open right from the start following an injury. A throwaway - if well meaning - comment can unintentionally create a negative perception early on, and if professionals working in hospitals and spinal centres adopt an attitude of “you can go back to work with the right help” from the start, the numbers of people returning to work could start to grow.

Even ahead of the new guidelines coming out, centres are already making changes: one opened up their vocational clinics to inpatients as well as outpatients, with immediate results.

The team working on the guidelines gained valuable insight from the University of Salford on the importance of the whole team around each individual - that's doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants, therapists - having high awareness of the issue of going back to work, and the possibilities. Stef explains:

“It's important the whole team around the injured person, realise the difference they can make in helping to shape expectations around work. It's about not avoiding the topic, having aspirations, and being able to refer on to specialist support.”



MASCIP also found that legal claims can often be seen as a barrier to returning to work - when actually they should be a big facilitator. The new guidelines set out how to make this happen. They also cover guidance for how occupational therapy services can best support people; the vital role of peer support, and the integration of vocation planning into the whole rehabilitation process. MASCIP's new vocational rehabilitation guidelines will be published later this year on their website (www.mascip.co.uk)

Back Up continues to support vocational rehabilitation through its Back Up to Work course, which has been running for ten years now. We get very positive feedback from course participants, this year every person who took part in Back Up to Work felt they had achieved their personal goals and they would all recommend going on the course. One recent participant said:

“This course made me look at myself in a different way and opened up a great deal of opportunities - meeting a very good mix of people from all over the country and excellent help and support from the buddies and group leaders were particular highlights. The speed interview feedback I received has filled me with so much confidence that I am already putting the wheels in motion to get back into employment!”



BACK UP GAVE ME MY CONFIDENCE BACK

Rosie, aged 60, rebuilt her confidence by attending our courses, volunteering and deciding to take on the might of Mount Snowdon.



In May 2013, Rosie was cycling to work when she felt her legs start to give way. She tried to get off her bike, but she collapsed on the pavement and was rushed to hospital. The doctors told her that she had experienced a spinal stroke and was unlikely to ever walk again. Her life changed in an instant.

“Being told I was unlikely to ever walk again was, of course, devastating news - I could only envisage another life which I thought would be totally different to the one I had already lived,” she says.

Rosie had exceptional support from friends and family, but she wanted to meet other people in a similar situation who could understand what she was going through.

“During my rehabilitation at Stoke Mandeville, I was surrounded by other people with a spinal cord injury all the time. After I had been at home for a while I really wanted to have the opportunity to meet others in the same situation who I could share problems with and learn from.”

Getting my confidence back

It was 18 months after her injury that Rosie decided to attend Back Up's over 50s Multi Activity course in Exmoor. Prior to attending the course, she was apprehensive. “I have a lot of neuropathic pain and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to keep up.” The experience was a revelation for Rosie.

“That was a completely life-changing week. I wanted to spend time with other people who were my age and had a spinal cord injury. I got that and so much more. Back Up gave me my confidence back. They also made me realise that there was so much still possible in my life. I laughed a lot that week. That's a really special part of what they do.”

Rosie returned from that week with renewed energy to tackle daily challenges and also motivated to get more involved with Back Up.

Becoming a volunteer

She soon applied to become a mentor. Rosie wanted the chance to support others with a spinal cord injury who could benefit from her experience.

“I am now mentoring regularly, and I find it both challenging and rewarding. I was nervous to begin with but there's always someone at the end of the phone at Back Up willing to listen to you and offer guidance. Back Up has played a big part in supporting me so it feels great to be able to start giving something back.”



Taking on the Snowdon Push

Rosie also decided that she wanted to do a challenge to raise funds and awareness of Back Up's work. She formed an all-female team to climb Mount Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales which stands at 3,560 feet. Rosie will take on this challenge in a specially adapted wheelchair with her 'Women of Altitude' team

which includes 13 close friends and her two daughters, Eve and Beth.

“Females are outnumbered by males in the spinal cord injury world so I suppose I wanted to celebrate a little female solidarity. I've always enjoyed challenges and doing things with groups of friends. Entering the Push ticks both those boxes.”

To follow Rosie's Snowdon Push journey with her 'Women of Altitude' team, you can visit her just giving page: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rosietween-womenofaltitude



To become a mentor, call Polly on 020 8875 1805 or email her at polly@backuptrust.org.uk

Would you like to take on the Snowdon Push to raise money for our services? Call Katherine on 020 8875 1805 or email her at Katherine@backuptrust.org.uk



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JAMES MORRISON AND NICK BLACHFORD FAMILY FUNDRAISERS EXTRAORDINAIRE



Today, three families in the UK will learn that a loved one has been paralysed due to a spinal cord injury. At Back Up we believe it is our job to help the families of those affected by spinal cord injury as well as the individuals (see page 16 feature on family mentoring), but what we are continually amazed by is how many families feel the same way about us. Every year we benefit from families who come up with new ways to fundraise for Back Up, driven by a desire to give something back.

Last year Nick Blachford took family fundraising to a new level. Nick's grandson, James Morrison, was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma in 2015, which left him paralysed from the chest down. Since then, despite going through extensive treatment, James has gone on to lead a team up Mount Snowdon to raise money for Back Up. His family and friends got right behind James in creating their own international challenge. Nick says:

“We saw the wonderful things Back Up does for people like James who are paralysed, so we channelled our fundraising to them. First with the Snowdon Push, then with the help of our friends in France we organised Journey for James, a four day 1100km bike ride from the Atlantic to the Med.”

The challenge took in the infamous Col Du Tourmalet, which at over 2000m is the highlight (or lowlight depending on whether you're trying to cycle up it) of the Tour de France. Nick explains that it was James's godfather Brian, a fitness fanatic, who came up with the idea. Nick and friends of his who live near him in France got together to provide the support team.

“I didn't realise how big our community of friends was. Most did not know James – I was overwhelmed with the support they gave.”

With the support of a friend who had been in the RAF, the planning for Journey for James was military-level. Hotels, food and back up support were organised – everything from team shirts to pork pies. It was all worth it. Nick recalls being at the finishing line, seeing the eight cyclists, which included James's aunt, Claire, “who had given absolutely everything” cross the line safely, all hugely emotional. “All 250 people who were at the finish were in tears. We raised over £13,000 for Back Up, it was a great moment.”

The team was inspired by James himself, following his enormous effort to get up Mount Snowdon for Back Up. Nick comments “it took an awful lot out of him but it never ever showed. He puts us all to shame with his determination. It took him a few days to recover! Now he is doing remarkably well, looking at universities and booked in for a driving test.” James came on a Back Up Skills for Independence course, and Nick credits Back Up with giving James a lot of confidence and skills and helping him become “even more independent.” In total, James's family has raised a staggering £25,420 for Back Up.

Kat Espiritu, Community Fundraiser at Back Up, added:

“Journey for James was incredible. On behalf of the team at Back Up I would like to thank everyone who has taken on their own personal challenge to support us. Without the fundraising efforts of people like Nick, James and Brian, Back Up would not be able to continue the work we do. So if you have a great fundraising idea, no matter how big or small, we want to hear from you!”

Check out our calendar of events on page 12, or if you have a fundraising idea please contact Kat at Katherine@backuptrust.org.uk or on 020 8875 6749.

LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

Most people agree that giving to charity in your will is a good idea – it's the gift that won't cost you a penny... now. But many stop short of taking action. We asked our Corporate Partnerships Manager Sean why he took the plunge.

Why did you decide to leave a legacy?

Making a will is something that's been on the to-do list for a while but has never seemed urgent enough to actually get it done. My wife, Helen, and I had a daughter in May last year and that prompted us to get on with it.

Why Back Up?

I had a spinal cord injury as a result of a snow boarding accident in 2000 and Back Up helped me to get my life back on track. I went on a Multi Activity course soon after leaving hospital and I attended a ski course the year after. I was back in the mountains doing something I never thought I would do again – it was amazing! Meeting Back Up was a game-changer for me – it opened my eyes to what was still possible and I haven't looked back. Subsequently I started volunteering at Back Up and now work in the fundraising team looking after our corporate partnerships. I feel lucky to work for such a brilliant organisation, as I get to see first hand how we change people's lives everyday and how the money raised makes that possible. Helen worked at Back Up for a few years too which is how we met, so all in all I have a lot to thank them for.



Janet, Individual Giving Fundraiser

After you've taken care of the people closest to you, a gift in your will could make a huge difference to the futures of people with spinal cord injury. More and more people are choosing to support a charity in this way. Leaving just 1% of your estate could have a big impact. If you have any questions, call me on 020 8875 6860 or email janet@backuptrust.org.uk, I'll be happy to talk things through.



Sean & Helen with baby Lyra

Was writing a will straightforward?

It was dead easy (sorry!) to sort the wills out. We booked an appointment with a legal consultant and she took us through a series of questions which took about an hour. As part of the process, she asked if we wanted to leave anything to charity which we were both keen to do. It feels good to know that you'll be doing some good after you've gone (although I hope we have a good few decades left yet!).

WILL MY LEGACY HAVE AN IMPACT?



Beth, Head of Services

Back Up's vital services are designed and delivered by people with a spinal cord injury who have been there and understand. Through our wheelchair skills training, telephone support, residential courses, mentoring and schools service, we empower people

to fully participate in work, school and family life. We know that a gift in your will is a big commitment and I'm sure you want to know it will be spent wisely. But I can assure you that, as a user-led organisation, we have an intimate understanding of the needs of people with a spinal cord injury and how to respond to them effectively. We know that many people are leaving rehabilitation without the skills to use a wheelchair or take care of themselves properly, which can make it incredibly difficult to reintegrate into society. We currently reach around 83% of newly injured people. Your legacy gift could help us reach even more.

Achievements Last Year

825 people with spinal cord injury registered to receive our support.

584 people learned new wheelchair skills.

662 people were supported by telephone.

HOW TO LEAVE A LEGACY

If you don't know where to start, try one of our discounted will-writing providers:



McMillan Williams Solicitors offer a 20% Back Up discount on will-writing services. Contact Andy Grant on 020 7186 0061 or andy.grant@mwsolicitors.co.uk



Peace of Mind Services offer a 20% discount on will-writing and estate planning services for individuals and families. Contact Vanessa on 0845 264 1163 to book your appointment or email her at info@peaceofmindservices.co.uk



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charge a low fixed price (£98 + VAT) however detailed your will. To arrange an appointment, call 0844 669 6148 or visit www.thegoodwillpartnership.co.uk/backuptrust

UPCOMING COURSES & FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Courses Calendar

July

23rd - 25th

Back Up to Work
Manchester

24th - 28th

Under 13s Multi Activity course 1
Exmoor

August

7th - 11th

13-17s Multi Activity course
Lake District

7th - 11th

Under 13s Multi Activity course 2
Exmoor

8th - 12th

Moving Forwards 18-25s course
Leeds

17th - 22nd

Belfast City Skills course

September

3rd - 7th

Next Steps
Bath

18th - 22nd

Over 50s Multi Activity course
Lake District

October

6th - 10th

Skills for Independence course
Coventry

Fundraising Events

18th June

Glasgow Men's 10k

30th June - 2nd July

Snowdon Push

8th July

Back Up Festival*

15th July - 29th Oct

Big Fun Run
Various Dates/Locations

15th July - 29th Oct

Dog Jog
Various Dates/Locations

30th July

Ride 100

3rd September

Parallel London

10th September

Great North Run

24th September

Scottish Half & 10k

7th - 8th October

Bournemouth Marathon Festival

8th October

Royal Parks Half

ALL YEAR ROUND

Skydive*

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*Back Up Event



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1. Drug Tariff, March 2013



FAMILIES AND FRIENDS NEED SUPPORT TOO: FAMILY MENTORING AT BACK UP



Charlie Fraser - Mentoring Coordinator

Back Up's mentoring service has been running for 11 years. Last year we matched 138 mentors to mentees. We have seen first-hand that having someone to talk to, who has been through a very similar experience, is incredibly helpful. All our mentors have direct experience of spinal cord injury (SCI).

In 2010 we extended the service to include families. We know that SCI affects the whole family. Charlie Fraser, Back Up's Family Mentoring Coordinator, matches partners, parents, siblings and children to mentors whose loved ones have a spinal cord injury. We also offer youth mentors for children under the age of 18 - a unique service. Mentoring is all about relating: can the mentor identify with the person and what they are going through? Charlie explains:

“People in need of mentoring come to us in a number of ways - sometimes self-referring, or perhaps because they are calling to seek help for a loved one. Then we explain that there is help for them too. We also get referrals from other Back Up services, and from organisations like Aspire and the spinal units across the UK.”

“It's such a great service that you run because even just talking to someone gives you the strength to keep going... just to be able to talk means everything.”

Could you be a mentor?

- > Are you close to someone who has a spinal cord injury?
- > Would you like to help other people in your situation? Perhaps you've received mentoring yourself - or wish you had
- > Could you spare an initial two days for training and then up to an hour a week for phone calls with a mentee?

“We started off matching partners and parents to mentors, then a few years ago we identified a need for sibling mentoring, and later our sibling mentors started supporting children of people with a spinal cord injury. This prompted us to additionally train adults whose parents have an SCI as mentors too. The service has grown enormously and is now very diverse.”

“It's great to be able to ask questions to someone who's been through something similar...”

We need you!

Why become a family mentor?

- > You will make a real difference to someone affected by spinal cord injury - someone who may not have received any emotional or practical support until now.
- > Mentoring is an excellent experience and the skills and qualities developed through mentoring can be useful on CVs, in existing careers, and for university and other applications.
- > This year's family mentoring training weekend is in June, so contact us now if you are keen to be there. Childcare will be available.

Anyone interested in becoming a family mentor could benefit from specialised training delivered by clinical psychologists - and accredited by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) under charity trade body NCVO (National Council of Volunteering Organisations). Training takes place over a weekend, in recognition of the fact that mentors are volunteers with busy lives - but it is thorough, as befits the service they will provide. Training involves:

- > Exploring the role of a mentor and the mentoring contract
- > Practising mentoring scenarios
- > Guidance on boundaries
- > Learning about risk and safeguarding
- > Learning to look after yourself



Most importantly, mentors develop active listening skills including summarising and reflecting feelings. The clinical psychologists who deliver the training are always on hand to support mentors afterwards, as are the mentoring team in the office. Charlie adds:

“For the last 18 months I've been the full-time family and under 18 mentoring coordinator. It is amazing how much the family service has grown - and demand has grown with it. Right now our priority is recruiting new mentors so we can continue supporting anyone who needs the service.”

If you would like to become a mentor contact Charlie Fraser or Polly Nabarro on 020 8875 1805 or email charlief@backuptrust.org.uk

This service is generously supported by The Persula Foundation.

A SPORTS REHABILITATION SUPPORT WORKER'S VIEW



Olivia Sklenar - CARE Award for Respect

To those on the outside it probably looks as though I spend my days playing wheelchair sport and exercising my competitive side, but I'd like to think it runs a little deeper than that. As the Sports Rehabilitation

Support Worker at the National Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, I am responsible for running fitness and weights sessions, introducing my patients to a variety of adapted sports and teaching the full range of wheelchair skills. My personal aim is to follow in the footsteps of "Poppa" Guttman (founder of the Paralympics and pioneer in spinal cord injury treatment) by promoting independence and ultimately showing individuals that there is life after spinal cord injury.

That is where Back Up comes in. I can take my patients to sports sessions, introduce them to handcycling and show them how to handle public transport safely. But I can only dream of taking individuals skiing, abseiling and on their first flight abroad. I try my hardest to show individuals how to continue doing the things they loved before they were injured, but Back Up are able to introduce them to a whole new world of incredible activities that most hadn't even experienced before their injury! They are also able to connect them

with a network of people with spinal cord injury who can share experiences that make daily life more manageable.

Last summer, I was invited to join Back Up as a buddy on their Multi Activity course in Exmoor. I was able to see how Back Up enabled participants to get out of their comfort zone and see what was still possible with a spinal cord injury. One lady joined us who had been a power chair user for a number of years. She never imagined that she would be able to take part in all of the activities with the other participants who had lower level injuries. On the final day she used a handbike for the first time and although she was exhausted, she really enjoyed her new-found independence. Now I am able to show my patients photos and tell them stories of the trip, as well as encourage them to go on one of Back Up's courses themselves.

We have a poster in the spinal gym at the hospital that reads 'Doctors save our lives, Nurses and therapists give us our lives back'. Well if that's the case, then charities like Back Up must show us how good our lives can be.



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Peter Henry, C5/6, Owner and Manager, Origin.



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BACK UP'S NEW WHEELCHAIR USER RESEARCH

Back Up recently carried out research into the factors that affect how wheelchair users choose, use and fund a wheelchair

Thanks to Pragma for their assistance developing our survey, as well as compiling and analysing the results.

Getting your first wheelchair

24% of respondents stated that they bought a second wheelchair because their first one was uncomfortable and 46% stated that they only got a chair they were happy with after a year.

Most people's first chair is typically provided by NHS wheelchair services. They offer a free chair or a voucher which can contribute towards the cost of a wheelchair of the user's choosing. Making the right choice can be difficult at this stage, as people have limited knowledge of their personal needs.

This means that the support available at this point to make that decision is hugely important and the results can be variable:

“[the wheelchair was] completely wrong shape and size for [my] body and [I] constantly fell out of it.”

“I took the free NHS one instead of the voucher the first time I needed one, but found it far too heavy and cumbersome for easy/sensible use.”

As it turns out, there are a huge amount of factors to be considered: weight, comfort, size, durability and adjustability all play a huge bearing on a person's choice.



Buying a new wheelchair

72% trust other wheelchair users' opinions when choosing a new chair.

The main source of expertise in this regard comes from other wheelchair users who were respondents' most trusted choice, followed by healthcare professionals like physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Wheelchair services came in fifth place followed by sales representatives, which suggests that wheelchair users themselves and those who work with them are by far the most valued sources of information.

“I would only trust myself and other wheelchair users.”

“I would listen to anyone who works with wheelchairs and wheelchair users regularly or is one. I would trust a physio in a spinal unit but not in a general outpatient department.”

The consensus was that you should try out a prospective chair several times in different environments, and you should always make sure that it's practical.

“Define what *you* need the chair to do, speak to other wheelchair users, get as much info as possible, and *always*, if possible, try out the chair before buying.”

Financing your wheelchair

40% of respondents paid for their wheelchair themselves followed by 37% who took the free option provided by wheelchair services.

Many think disability equipment is generally hugely overpriced, which places them in a difficult position: you can choose a free wheelchair that may not meet your needs, or pay a large sum of money to ensure you get the chair that gives you the best quality of life.

“*ALL* wheelchairs are far too expensive, you could have a decent 2nd-hand car for what it costs for a decent chair.”

“So I asked for the voucher scheme and received a rather big shock. I was entitled to a "full" voucher about £200-£250. When I arrived in the shop hoping to purchase a new chair I was told I would need at least £1000 for one that suited my needs.”

Wheelchair Training

33% received no wheelchair skills training.

Nearly all respondents unanimously agreed that wheelchair training was absolutely essential. However, a third stated that they had no support from anyone to learn the required skills.

If people did receive training, most of them attended sessions run by other wheelchair users like those provided by Back Up in spinal units throughout the UK. Our sessions give people the confidence and tools to use their manual or power chair to its full potential. We also run Wheelchair Skills Extra: a session that takes the skills learnt on the wards and puts them into practice in daily life, showing participants how to get around where they live.

On a more positive note, 75% of respondents did confirm that they were using their current wheelchair to its full potential. We also noted that 71% of those who took the survey had been wheelchair users for three years or more. This hopefully suggests that while it may not happen immediately, getting a wheelchair that suits your needs is definitely possible.

If you'd like to share your thoughts or questions, post on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/backuptrust) or tweet us @backuptrust.

If you're a wheelchair user and would like to improve your skills, please contact our outreach and support team at outreachandsupport@backuptrust.org.uk or call us on 020 8875 1805

HOW YOUR MONEY CHANGES LIVES



Regular Contact

Leaving hospital and returning home is a daunting time for someone who is newly injured. As little as £5 could enable us to call someone and offer them advice when they're most in need.



Schools Advocate Visit

Settling back into school can be a difficult experience for children and young people with a spinal cord injury. Just £25 could pay for one of our volunteer schools advocates to visit their school to talk to staff and students and ensure that they can fully participate in school life.



Wheelchair Skills Training for a group

Without wheelchair skills training, people often feel that they cannot fully embrace life as a wheelchair user. It costs £280 to give a group of eight people life-enhancing confidence and practical tools to get around where they live.



Train a volunteer mentor

Volunteer mentors use their personal experience of spinal cord injury to support people in a similar situation, offering them advice and helping them move forwards with their life. It costs £420 for a mentor to receive training from a volunteer clinical psychologist to provide this invaluable support.



Life-changing courses

For just £28 a month, one person with a spinal cord injury could attend our Skills for Independence course. There they will learn essential skills that can have a huge impact on their life like dressing, cooking and self-care.



The funds you raised in 2016

In 2016, our fundraisers travelled across Europe, cycled from London to Paris, abseiled down buildings, spent 30 hours using a wheelchair, raced, baked, walked and pushed - all to support the work we do. Their determination, hard work and passion raised over £90,000 this year to enable us to deliver our life-changing services.

In 2017 we are aiming to raise £100,000 which could pay for 115 people including family members to receive mentoring from one of our trained volunteer mentors - all of whom have personal experience of spinal cord injury.



We could also cover the cost of training nine spinal cord injured mentors and five family mentors to provide this specialist service.



Impact in 2016



We trained **584** people in wheelchair skills, with **91%** of participants increasing in confidence.



100% of people who attended one of our life-changing courses would recommend it to a friend.



89% of the **662** people who received regular telephone contact felt supported.



97% of people who were mentored felt more able to cope and adjust to their new situation.

Back Up receives no government funding and every pound you donate will make a huge difference by providing practical skills and emotional support to people with a spinal cord injury and their family members.

Visit www.backuptrust.charitycheckout.co.uk/Donate to make a donation today.

Fundraise for Back Up

If you'd like to run, push, cycle or hold an event to support our work, please call us on 020 8875 1805 or send us an email at fundraising@backuptrust.org.uk.



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