

# Buddy Role Description

**Reports to:** Karim Dafallah, Course Coordinator  
On courses report to the Group Leaders

## **Purpose of the role:**

To help all group members to have a positive experience on the course, by assisting, encouraging, listening to and supporting participants, group leaders and nurses/PAs alike.

They are not matched up with individuals but are there to support the whole group.

## **Key tasks:**

- 1. Contribute to a positive atmosphere/experience with every person and across the whole group**
  - Spend time getting to know all members of the group
  - Be aware of other group members and sensitively/respectfully build links with all especially those who may be quieter or more hesitant, to enable them to be involved
  - Provide support and encouragement to all group members including spinal cord injured (SCI) participants and volunteers
  - Be a part of the group and participate in general activities. You, like all group members, are there to get involved, learn, stretch yourself, and have fun!
  - Listen to and learn from others
  
- 2. Contributing to the positive experience of the group as a whole**
  - Working as part of a team – work together with others, communicate, help out and muck in generally, to help things run smoothly on the course.
  - Participate in course activities including social times
  
- 3. Practical assistance to spinal cord injured participants**
  - Push wheelchair users when requested/needed e.g. on difficult terrain/slopes
  - Supporting SCI participants during wheelchair skills training sessions
  - Help individuals with items of outer clothing or at mealtimes if needed
  - Help SCI participants get ready for the day if needed, eg: pack their bag for them under their direction
  - Assist wheelchair users transferring into and out of vehicles and equipment
  - Encourage people to try new things with as minimal help as possible – where appropriate
  
- 4. General practical assistance to help the week run smoothly**
  - Look after your own health & safety and wellbeing and that of others, especially in relation to manual handling.
  - Sort out, prepare, put away or move equipment and luggage as required
  - Help to prepare for or clear up after activities, mealtimes etc
  - Generally, communicate with and be aware of the needs of participants, the care team, group leaders and other volunteers, and be as helpful as possible

**Buddies must not carry out or assist SCI participants with any personal or medical care as they are not trained to do this. This includes:**

- Anything to do with bowel or bladder management
- Skin care management, eg: applying creams or dressings
- Giving medication
- Shaving
- Washing
- Helping SCI participants to turn during the night
- **Assisting a participant with moving and handling without the appropriate supervision and support from a trained group member (care team volunteers) or the course instructors. You should NEVER assist an individual on your own.**

As courses progress, some participants may talk openly about how they have sustained their injuries and the effect that it has on their lives, this is a sensitive and personal issue. Empathy and a listening ear are so important. Please respect though that not all participants will want to share this information so be mindful of questions you ask. The course is a learning experience for all; we want you to be empowered and help empower others. We hope that you will feel you have developed yourself through volunteering with us. You will be very tired by the end of the course so make sure you plan in some rest time.

## Back Up's ethos of integration

You will be supporting people within Back Up's ethos of integration – all group members are unique but equal – everybody including yourself will be contributing, participating, included in activities, and learning new things.

If you are new to supporting people with disabilities, you may find it helpful to bear in mind some of these tips :

- Do not underestimate the intelligence or ability of the person you are talking to.
- Do not assume that all participants require assistance. Ask if they need a hand or wait to be asked.
- When assisting someone, ask them how best to do this. They are the best person to know how they need to be assisted.
- Always address the participant, not the PA they are with.
- Be aware of personal needs and preferred ways of communicating and working and respect their requirements.
- Try and work around an issue, rather than avoiding it, so that everyone can be included in activities
- Don't interrupt, correct, speak for the person or be tempted to finish sentences off for them.
- A wheelchair should be viewed as part of the user's body space. Keep an appropriate distance and never use the chair as something to lean on.
- It is perfectly acceptable to offer to help guide the wheelchair or negotiate obstacles such as doors. But only push someone's chair if they have said that it is OK for you to do so.
- Only assist with moving and handling tasks where you are clear on how to do it safely (pay careful attention in the first night briefing, and follow instructions from the person, the trained care team, activity instructors and group leaders).

Read our [Transforming Lives Strategy 2021-2025](#) to learn more about our vision, mission, values, goals and components of success' which focuses on finding better ways to support more people affected by spinal cord injury.