



Frequently asked questions about the Back Up mentoring service

We understand that there can be many questions when you're looking for support so we've written some common FAQs about our mentoring service for individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI) and family members. We cover questions for both potential mentees and mentors.

What is mentoring?

It is a mostly telephone-based support service where we match mentees with a suitable mentor with relevant experience to enable them to feel supported, connected and to achieve their goals within ten phone calls or less.

Questions for mentees

I'd like to have mentoring, what do I do?

Please sign up to Mentorloop and one of the team will be in touch with you within the next two weeks.

How many calls are allowed?

We recommend up to 4 calls up to an hour each. Relationships can go up to 10 calls and occasionally it is possible to have one or two more if there is a specific reason but it is decided on a case-by-case basis.

How will you choose a mentor for me?

We will match you on the basis of your answers to questions about your or your relative's spinal cord injury, how it affects you/them in terms of mobility, bladder, bowels, pain and we will make a suitable match based on this as well as personal interests. We will ask you what goals you'd like to achieve through mentoring and your mentor will be chosen to help you reach this.

I don't feel like I need ten full calls, can I still speak to a mentor?

Absolutely, sometimes people get what they need and reach their goals in one or two calls.

Can we have a video call?

Yes, you can request this through the system.

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I've been injured for many years – can I still have mentoring?

Absolutely, mentoring is available at any stage, provided you can choose a goal that you'd like to achieve.

I can only speak at weekends or in evenings, is this okay?

Yes, mentors can often be flexible to work around your availability. Please let us or your mentor know your availability.

I've got mental health issues, can I still have mentoring?

Yes, 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 support. Please let us know how your mental health issues affect you and what support you may be receiving.

I've had mentoring before, would it be okay to have it again?

Yes. Usually, one mentoring relationship is sufficient for mentees to reach their goals, but it is possible for mentees to have another relationship, again, if they can identify some new goals to be achieved through mentoring.

Is everything I say kept private between my mentor and I?

Mentors will report back a general summary of your conversations to the mentoring team. Conversations are confidential within Back Up (you, your mentor and staff at Back Up), except where there is a safeguarding concern about serious harm to you or someone else. In this case we may need to involve other services, such as your GP.

Is everybody accepted to receive mentoring?

The mentoring team will undertake a rigorous assessment process where they will decide if we have a suitable volunteer mentor who would be able to support you. Occasionally, the team will make a decision that mentoring is not the most appropriate support. We will do our utmost to signpost you to an appropriate service whether it be at Back Up or externally.

Can my mentor and I meet in person?

Mentoring primarily takes place over the phone so that we can ensure we can make the most suitable match. It may be possible to meet in person during the relationship in a public place provided both parties agree and we are made aware.

Can I have my mentor's telephone number or befriend them on social media?

No. We ask all mentors not to give out their personal contact details to mentees or to accept requests during the mentoring relationship. If you would like to get in contact with your mentor,

please call the mentoring team in the office on **020 8875 1805**. They will get in touch with your mentor and pass on any message or schedule a call for you both.

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

At the end of a mentoring relationship you'll be asked to score yourself on the questions you were asked in the beginning and whether you've achieved what you set out to. 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're facing. 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 but we hope that the end of mentoring will not be the end of your relationship with Back Up. There are other opportunities to get involved which can offer you further support to help you meet your aspirations and reach your goals such as [courses](#) or [volunteering](#).

How do my mentor and I arrange calls?

We suggest arranging a call at the end of your last phone call, or keeping to the same time every week/fortnight, but if you need to reschedule, you can use the system to do this.

Questions for mentors

Who can be a mentor?

People of all ages (including under 18s) with any level of spinal cord injury can be a mentor, as can a partner, parent, sibling, child or other immediate relative of someone with SCI.

What do I need to become a mentor?

Excellent listening skills, a desire to support others and lots of experience of living with, or having a family member with a spinal cord injury are key attributes to our mentors. The most important skills you need are to be able to listen without judging, empathise, and share your own experience of SCI.

How much time do I need to become a mentor?

We require mentors to attend a training weekend and then if you are successful, you can mentor as much or as little as you want, as required. Mentoring relationships can be up to 10 calls of up to an hour each, with some time to record notes of the call and to send them to the office.

I haven't been asked to mentor in a while – why is this?

We make mentoring matches based on the need of mentees who are referred to us, whether that be age, level of injury, mobility. Don't take it personally, the likelihood is that we haven't had a referral that would be a suitable match for you.

How often do you train mentors?

Currently we run two family mentor trainings and two spinal cord injury mentor trainings per financial year.

Can mentors have more than one mentee at a time?

This can happen if the mentor is willing and able to take on more than one mentee at a time. If there is the demand.