

FAQs For Potential Back Up Mentors

Who can be a mentor?

You'll need to have great listening skills, and a willingness to share your own experience of SCI. People of all ages (including under 18s) with any level of SCI can be a mentor, as can the partner, parent, sibling, child or other immediate relative of someone with SCI.

What sort of experience do I need?

You don't need to have any experience of mentoring or supporting other people (although if you have got some that's great). The most important skills you need are to be able to listen without judging, empathise, and share your own experience of SCI.

Does everyone who applies become a mentor?

No, not everyone. You might decide it's not for you. We might feel that it's not quite the right time for you, or you might fit better with one of our other volunteer roles.

How do you select who will be a mentor and who won't?

We look at application forms and carry out interviews to see how someone's experience and skills fit against the mentor role. During the mentor training weekend, we can find out more about how ready someone is to become a mentor.

What does the training involve?

Training takes place over a weekend, at an accessible venue. You'll get to understand the principles behind our mentoring service, and the skills you'll need to support a mentee. There are usually around 10-12 new mentors on the training weekend, as well as Back Up staff & trainers, so you'll have lots of chances to ask questions & share experiences and ideas.

How do you/I know if I am ready to be a mentor?

Usually, people can tell for themselves during interviews or training, whether they're ready to support other people. Generally, most people come to mentoring at least 3 years after their / their family member's SCI. This means they've had time to adjust & start to get on with their lives. If we don't feel you're emotionally ready to be a mentor, we will tell you honestly. We'd always encourage you to apply again later on.

What will happen if you don't think I will make a good mentor?

We will give you feedback from your interviews or training, and talk over our decision with you. We might suggest other Back Up volunteer roles that we think you might enjoy.

Does a mentor get paid?

No, all of our mentors are volunteers. Back Up will pay for expenses associated with your mentor role (phone calls, travel etc).

Does a mentee get charged for the service?

No, the service is free to all mentees.

Does a mentor get a qualification?

No. Our training is accredited by the Mentoring & Befriending Foundation, but at the moment this doesn't give any formal qualifications to our volunteers. We can however, on request, supply you with a certificate acknowledging attendance of the mentor training weekend.

Do I get any information about who I am going to be talking to, and if so how?

When we're arranging a match, we will talk to you and give you an outline of the mentee and the sort of things they want to talk about. Once we confirm the match, we will send you some more detailed background information and your mentee's first name & contact details.

Does mentoring mean meeting face to face with someone?

Usually mentors and mentees speak via the phone, or use Skype or email to communicate. This is because our mentors live all over the UK, and we make matches based on injury level, mobility & other factors rather than location. If a mentor and mentee live near to each other, they can arrange to speak face to face, but this would be in a public place, not in their homes.

How long will I talk to each mentee for?

A phone call between you and your mentee will usually last for between 30 minutes and an hour. Mentoring usually lasts for 10 phone calls, with a call every 1 to 3 weeks.

How many mentees will I be matched with per year/month?

That will depend on how many mentees we have, their injury level & what they want to talk about. We usually limit people to a maximum of 2 mentees at the same time. Mentoring relationships will usually last up to six months.

How many mentees do you match up per year in total?

In the financial year 2017-2018 we made 140 mentoring matches.

How many mentors do you have?

We have up to 150 active mentors at any time (SCI mentors and family mentors).

How do I know if mentoring is working/I am doing it right?

We ask our mentors to contact us after each call, to let us know how things are going with your mentee. If you're not sure how things are going, or you have specific questions or areas that concern you, we will talk over them. Part of the mentoring team's job is to offer ideas and suggestions to mentors. We will give you guidance and feedback. We will also pass on feedback from your mentee.

What do I do if the person I am mentoring is feeling suicidal?

This is a very rare occurrence. We will give you training so that you know what to do if this ever happens. Back Up staff will be available to support you with advice, or if you need to talk about how you're feeling after a difficult call. In addition, we have mentor supervisors who can offer extra support at any time if you're worried about a mentee.