

# Goal three

**Meaningful Connections:** creating opportunities for people affected by spinal cord injury to connect with others in similar situations to achieve their goals.

## Setting the Scene

Adjusting to spinal cord injury can be overwhelming both for the person with a spinal cord injury and their family. People can often feel isolated and alone, thinking no one could possibly understand what they are going through. No one needs to face living with spinal cord injury alone. We use lived experiences to ensure people reach their goals.

Almost four out of five people sustaining spinal cord injury do not receive inpatient rehabilitation at a specialist Spinal Cord Injury Centre. This means that recently injured people spend less time learning from others in a similar situation. Typically, this can be people with co-morbidities, those with Cauda Equina or people with lower-level injuries who can walk. We know that connecting with others in a similar situation can positively influence the adjustment process of living with a spinal cord injury both for the individual and their family. It can make the difference between surviving, or thriving.

## What did people with spinal cord injury tell us?

“Back Up opened my eyes to what is possible and introduced me to people further along in their journey.”

“I had been shocked by how little knowledge of spinal cord injury there is in mainstream health and social care services.”

“I now feel I can support my brother when he needs it but most of the time can just get on with being a sister.”



## Our Focus to 2030

### Creating Meaningful Connections:

We will create more opportunities for people affected by spinal cord injury to connect with others who understand their experience. These connections will help people gain confidence and practical support, guiding them through their adjustment to life post-injury. We will provide clear pathways for individuals to become supporters and mentors, helping others along their journey.



### Supporting Families:

We will be leaders in supporting family members of those with a spinal cord injury. This begins with the acute phase, through information and support online and in-person at relatives' days, to post-discharge from the hospital through peer mentoring, family rehabilitation, online courses and dedicated digital pathways. Helping family members recognise that a positive future is possible.



### Partnerships for Greater Impact:

We will work alongside the NHS, wheelchair services and other partner organisations to reach those who may not have access to specialist spinal cord injury centres. By sharing resources based on lived experience we'll challenge negative perceptions of spinal cord injury and show that a positive future is possible.