

Trustee Recruitment Pack 2025/26

Welcome

I am delighted that you are considering becoming a trustee at Back Up. It is an exciting time to join us - our [Limitless Ambition to Change Lives](#) strategy take us to 2030. It sees us support even more people affected by spinal cord injury through a mix of services and digital support. We're looking for a new trustee to play a vital role in the governance of this passionate charity as we look ahead to the future.

If you're successful in your application, you'll join our team of existing trustees who live far and wide and come from a range of backgrounds with varied interests. They are, however, united by a common interest and passion, and that's to transform the lives of people affected by spinal cord injury.

You may have previous trustee experience or be considering such a role for the first time. All applicants are welcome as we are looking for a range of skills, attributes and experiences. You don't need a university degree. We are keen to receive applications from people affected by spinal cord injury and we particularly welcome applications from younger people and those from an ethnic minority background.

We would also love to hear from applicants with a background in one or more of the following areas:

- Treasury / Accountancy / Audit / Risk
- Third Sector Knowledge
- Fundraising and Income Generation

Back Up also offers a 'future trustee programme' for up to 4 people with spinal cord injury. This is a year-long programme to give you the skills, experience and confidence to be a trustee. If you're interested in becoming a trustee in the future but aren't there yet, this programme is for you.

If you still have questions after reading this, the contact details of Abigail Lock, our CEO, are on the last page.

My life changed forever in 2019, when I broke my neck in a cycling accident, leaving me with a life-changing spinal cord injury. Back Up were there to support me in my transition from home to hospital when I needed them. So I can attest personally to the transformative impact of Back Up's services. It is a huge honour to serve on the Board of Trustees. I wish you the best of luck with your application.

Yours sincerely,

Damian Riley

Chair of Trustees.



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Information about spinal cord injury and why we exist

Your brain and spinal cord are vital for controlling your bodily functions. The spinal cord is responsible for communicating two-way messages to and from the brain to all parts of the body – your muscles, organs and your skin. We are able to feel pain and move our arms or legs because of these messages or impulses.

If the spinal cord is damaged or injured, some of the messages or impulses may be ‘interrupted’. This can lead to partial or total loss of feeling or movement in parts of your body – including your limbs and your internal organs.

Most spinal cord injuries cause loss of movement and feeling in the parts of the body below the level of the injury. If you damage or break your spinal cord close to your neck, this will cause paralysis in a larger part of the body than damage to your spinal cord lower down your back. As well as the physical impact of a spinal cord injury, there are also emotional and psychological effects on the person concerned – and their family.

Statistics

- There are an estimated 105,000 people in the UK living with a spinal cord injury
- Each year over 4,700 people are newly injured.
- Every two hours, someone’s life will change forever in the UK because of being spinal cord injured
- Less than a third of people with a spinal cord injury are in employment

In the coming years we believe that there will be a greater need for our services due to;

- local authority funding cuts
- demand for specialist NHS rehabilitation services outstripping supply
- shorter spinal cord injury rehabilitation
- difficulty accessing specialist spinal cord injury rehabilitation (especially for children and people with a spinal cord injury not caused by accidents)

These factors all affect people’s wellbeing, their need to maximise their independence, and their ability to participate in normal everyday activities and roles. People with a spinal cord injury have high support needs around employment, and pressure on them to be working is increasing.

Read more about spinal cord injury [on our website](#).



Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

Our vision is a world where people with spinal cord injury can reach their full potential.

Our Mission

Our mission is to deliver services that build confidence, independence and inspire people affected by spinal cord injury to transform their lives.

Our Values

We embrace challenge

- Challenge is central to our learning and growth; it helps us gain knowledge and skills. By finding ways to overcome challenge and move forward we gain a sense of achievement, supporting us to realise our full potential.

We have fun

- We believe that having fun allows us to connect with others, whilst opening up opportunities to develop, achieve and get the most out of life, showing that there is a positive future after spinal cord injury.

We build inclusive communities:

- We achieve more for people affected by spinal cord injury when we work together. We are collaborative and inclusive in our approach. We embrace diversity, working with and supporting individuals, groups, and the wider spinal cord injury community, bringing people together.

We are ambitious for each other:

- We are driven by the needs of people with a spinal cord injury and their families. We are passionate, striving to be the best. We set high standards, and we work hard to reach them. We are proactive, push boundaries, try new approaches and we learn quickly. We recognise that failure doesn't have to equal loss, rather an opportunity for growth. We listen to what people affected by spinal cord injury want and we seek innovative responses based on their feedback.

“Back Up has always had the ability and passion to challenge and change, not just the public’s perception of what can be achieved after a spinal cord injury, but the person and their family who is directly affected. We continuously adapt and change our services as we see people’s rehabilitation and community support reduced over the years. However, the way we deliver our services stays the same and rooted in our values.” **Abigail Lock, CEO**



About us

The charity:

At Back Up, we inspire people affected by spinal cord injury to get the most out of life. Last year we reached 2,799 people with our award-winning services that are designed and delivered by people affected by spinal cord injury. The enthusiastic, inclusive and supportive spirit of our very skilled staff ensure excellence in the services we deliver.

We offer wheelchair skills training, an accredited mentoring service, life skills and activity courses, support returning to work or education as well as support to family members of people with spinal cord injury. Our services are available to people with all levels of spinal cord injury and their loved ones. Find out more about the support we can offer on [our website](#).

Our approach:

We know that people affected by spinal cord injury are best placed to know what they need and how to support others in a similar situation. People affected by spinal cord injury are involved throughout Back Up, delivering our services and forming a significant proportion of our staff, volunteers and board of trustees (we always aim for at least 50% of board members to be spinal cord injured.)

We pride ourselves in being innovative and creative to ensure people affected by spinal cord injury drive our strategy and services. Consultation happens at every stage of decision-making, from establishing need, to designing and developing the services, to delivery and then review and recommendations.

In 2024 Back-Up won The Sunday Times Spotlight Award for the Best Place to work for Disabled People. We also have Disability Confident Leader status.

Peer support:

At Back Up, peer support has always been a central part of our work. Many of our staff and volunteers, and also our trustees, are affected by spinal cord injury. They regularly draw on their experiences in the delivery of their jobs. Indeed, we have many staff and volunteer opportunities that are only open to people with lived experience of spinal cord injury because of the specific skillset they require.

Many of the people we support remark that having the chance to speak to others in a similar situation makes a huge difference to their emotional and physical wellbeing. For some, Back Up's services offer the first chance to speak to someone else who understands life with a spinal cord injury. This supportive network can play a vital role in getting back up to living life to the full.



Our strategy

Our Limitless Ambition Strategy was launched in April 2025. Over 500 people helped us create our strategy and carve out the three goals which matter to those we support.

Living confidently – empowering people with a spinal cord injury with the confidence, knowledge and practical skills to live a full and independent life.

Everyone thriving – ensuring all individuals affected by spinal cord injury can reach their full potential.

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

We now know that over 4,700 people are newly injured each year across the UK. We are focused on how we can ensure that we have the greatest impact on the largest number of people possible.

More information can be found by reading our [Limitless Ambition](#) strategy and [our impact and annual reports](#).



“Becoming a mentor and realising that I have the ability to make a difference to somebody’s life has been a completely positive experience.”

(Mentor)



Back Up Strategy 2025-2030

Vision

A world where people with spinal cord injury can reach their full potential.

Mission

Deliver services that build confidence, independence and inspire people affected by spinal cord injury to transform their lives.

Values and Behaviours

Embrace challenge

Bold, Adaptable

Have fun

Positive, Motivational

Build inclusive communities

Open, Friendly

Ambitious for each other

Expert, Strive for Better

Living Confidently:

empowering people with a spinal cord injury with the confidence, knowledge and practical skills to live a full and independent life.

Everyone Thriving:

ensuring all individuals affected by spinal cord injury can reach their full potential.

Meaningful Connections:

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

Our Foundations

- Lived Understanding
- Growing Income to Meet our Ambition
- Being Data-led
- Driving Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Developing and Empowering our People
- Powered by Volunteers
- Being Inclusive
- Compelling Communications
- Committed to Collaboration
- Well-run, Sustainable Organisation



About the Trustee role

We have a detailed role description and person specification over the next few pages to help you understand the requirements of the role.

The main purpose of our role:

As trustees at Back Up, we are volunteers with a specific legal responsibility to:

- Ensure our aims and objectives are being met
- Act in the best interest of the charity
- Manage responsibility for what we have (our people, our money etc)
- Act with reasonable care and skill

You can find more information from the [charity commission](#).

What you will gain:

- An insight into how a charity runs, particularly how a charity board runs
- A new group of friends and colleagues
- A sense of pride when hearing about the difference our services make and that you
- A role in transforming lives affected by spinal cord injury.
- Confidence in building relationships with a wide range of people and speaking up at meetings
- An opportunity to develop your skills and experiences
- An opportunity to use your skills and experience to the benefit of the charity

Being a trustee is a voluntary role, therefore unpaid, but expenses including for travel are reimbursed.

You will receive a full induction to help you in the role at Back Up. In addition, where there is a training need, a range of training courses are on offer. You'll need to commit time and energy to attend these, building up your knowledge so that you feel confident in the role. This often takes longer than you think, but we understand that – we were all new trustees once too.



Trustee Person Specification

Key Skills:

- Ability to support, motivate and inspire people to get involved
- Excellent communication skills in person, in writing and on the telephone
- Respect for others, for confidentiality and able to treat people equally
- Highly organised: able to manage multiple tasks, conflicting priorities, and responsive to deadlines

Qualifications and Experience:

Specific experience that would be useful to Back Up. You may have one or more of these:

- Accountancy
- Third Sector Knowledge
- Fundraising knowledge
- Personal experience of spinal cord injury

Personal Attributes:

- Integrity and honesty
- Proactive – seek out answers to your questions without a prompt
- A demonstrable commitment to Back Up's aims and values
- Honest, reliable, enthusiastic and conscientious
- Team player, flexible and adaptable
- Willingness to understand and hear about issues relating to spinal cord injury

Time Commitment:

- Currently, three and a half hourly board meetings four times a year, evenings in SW London
- One to two away-days per year
- Two-hour committee meetings (four times per year)
- Spending two to three hours prior to meetings, reading and absorbing information
- Reflecting and discussing by telephone
- Follow up to meetings – reading and commenting on minutes, carrying out any
- agreed actions



Requirements:

You must be...

- Over 18
- Not bankrupt
- Subject to satisfactory DBS check and references
- Not excluded by Companies House or Charity Commission
- Not bound by conflicts of interest that would be so significant as to undermine the role in general e.g. a member of a group that discriminates against people based on gender or ethnicity



Specific responsibilities

Role Description: Trustee

Reports to: Chair of Trustees

Accountable to: People affected by spinal cord injury, Charities Commission and Companies House

Summary:

The Board supports the vision and mission of the organisation. We ensure the delivery of the strategy, so that people affected by spinal cord injury can realise their full potential.

Vision and Mission

- To uphold the values of the charity, undertaking the duties of trusteeship in a way that adds to public confidence and trust in the charity
- Promoting and developing the charity in order for it to grow and maintain its relevance to society
- To support decisions that are in the best interest of service users, donors, volunteers and stakeholders at all times
- To take big decisions about the future

Compliance, quality and effectiveness

- Support development of policies that further the aims and objectives of Back Up and to monitor their success
- Ensure compliance with our memorandum and articles
- Ensure Back Up's accountability and legal obligations
- Maintain sound financial management of the charity's resources, ensuring expenditure is in line with the organisation's objects and investment activities meet accepted standards and policies
- Ensuring resources are used in an efficient and cost-effective manner
- Maintain effective board performance
- Remain aware of the legal responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship and act in accordance with liabilities
- Manage/declare any personal conflicts of interest.
- Strive for best practice in governance, through proactive learning and Development

Back Up Trustee's commit to

- 1) **Own Back Up's strategy**
 - a. Be cheerleaders for the strategy – advocate for it internally and externally
 - b. Hold it at the core of all our decision making.
 - c. Ensure that there is a robust plan for its implementation
- 2) **Set us up for success**



- a. Make sure that the achievement of the objectives is realistic and achievable
 - b. Define risk appetite and consider and balance the risks and opportunities of initiatives to deliver the plan.
 - c. Agree priorities and ensure that resources (physical, intellectual and financial) are allocated appropriately to meet the objectives
- 3) Hold the leadership to account**
- a. Challenge and critique management in a supportive way
 - b. Be honest about and empathetic to constraints.
 - c. Scrutinise the performance of the leadership team in achieving delivery of the strategy and its objectives
- 4) Support the leadership team**
- a. Be accessible and available, with a broad scope of engagement
 - b. Provide specific knowledge and expertise to help the leadership team achieve objectives and fill any skill gaps
 - c. Act as a support and sounding board to individual members of the management and volunteer team if needed
- 5) Plan for the future**
- a. Take a thoughtful approach to appropriate succession planning that reflects recruitment of a diverse community.
 - b. Make sure that the charity is run sustainably, both financially and from an Environmental Social and Governance perspective
 - c. Take a long term view for the good of the charity; aid prioritisation, take difficult decisions.

Volunteering with Back Up

Back Up is committed to creating an inclusive culture that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. We particularly welcome applications from disabled candidates and those with lived experience of spinal cord injury.

Back Up is recognised as a Disability Confident Leader (Level 3) under the government's Disability Confident Scheme.

This recognition reflects how we work as an organisation. Inclusion is not an add-on to our services. It is embedded in our culture, leadership and recruitment practices.

Next steps

You've read the pack, and you:

1. Feel inspired by the work of Back Up
2. Have read the role description and person specification and feel you could make a good trustee

So, it's time to apply.

Please send your CV along with an accompanying letter of no more than two pages explaining your reasons for applying and how you meet the person specification to HR@backuptrust.org.uk Please use the subject line **Back Up Trustee**

The deadline for completing the application is **midnight on Sunday 19th July 2026**.

- All applications will be reviewed against the role description and person specification by a small team of trustees and the CEO by 21st July 2026.
- Everyone will be contacted by email or phone with regards to the success of your application at this stage and you'll have the opportunity to get feedback if you are not successful.
- If you have been shortlisted, you'll be invited for a 45 minute online interview with a Back Up trustee and the CEO on Thursday **30th July 2026** with a second round interview on **Thursday 13th August 2026**. Please advise us in your application if you cannot make these dates.
- If you are successful, you'll be asked to attend our board away day as an observer to be held on **Wednesday 9th September 2026**.
- We expect you'll have more questions, and if so you can get in touch with Abigail, Back Up's CEO.

You can contact us:

Abigail Lock

Email: Abigail@backuptrust.org.uk

020 8875 6725

If you have any questions, please do get in contact with us.

Good luck with your application. We look forward to hearing from you.

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