



back up
transforming lives after spinal cord injury

The young person's guide to spinal cord injury

“ Hello,

My name is Kevin. When I was just a baby, I had a condition called epiglottitis. This left a blood clot on my spinal cord which caused my injury.

I hadn't met many people who used a wheelchair until I encountered Back Up. I was at junior school at the time and I wanted to improve my wheelchair skills so I could go out with my friends.

The first activity I did with Back Up was their Youth Advisory Group Weekend. It was such a fun few days. I learned new skills like one-handed pushing and reversing backwards, and I got to meet other people with a spinal cord injury for the first time. I then went on one of Back Up's outdoor activity courses, trying out abseiling, canoeing, and making dinner over a campfire!



Back up have helped me make new friends, taught me new skills, and built my confidence. They showed me what was possible, so I started to volunteer to help other young people become more independent.

If you're a young person with a spinal cord injury, I'd totally recommend getting in touch with Back Up. Whatever the reason, Back Up is there to help.

Kevin”

young volunteer



Wheelchair skills

Do you want to feel more confident using your wheelchair, find out how to go up and down kerbs, or learn techniques for getting your power chair over steps.

We run lots of training sessions at spinal centres, hospitals, and on our courses. All our young wheelchair skills trainers have a spinal cord injury themselves and can help you to use your chair more confidently and independently.

Keeping in touch

If you are happy for us to contact you, our outreach team will give you a call every couple of months to see how you're getting on. We also have an under 18's newsletter that we send out four times a year with stories from young people about things like going on holiday or heading to a summer festival.

For any questions about any of our services, do get in touch with Under 18's manager, Ella at ella@backuptrust.org.uk or call her on 020 88751 805

Speak to another young person

There's a lot to deal with after a spinal cord injury and you may have questions about what the future looks like. Speaking to another young person who has been there and can understand what you're going through could help answer your questions.



“Talking to a young volunteer helped me make sense of my situation. It was nice to speak to someone who understood how I felt.”
Becky, young person

“It was rewarding listening to young people's experiences and seeing the improvement in their confidence throughout the calls.”
Bethany, young volunteer

At Back Up, we have young volunteers with a spinal cord injury who have received training on how to support others in a similar situation. They can offer you a safe space to talk about different topics or ask practical questions. Whatever is on your mind, our volunteers are ready to listen.

We can arrange for you to have a one-off phone or skype conversation with another young person or set up regular contact for an agreed amount of time.

Conversation topics could include:

- Returning to school
- Bladder and bowels
- Holidays
- Relationships and making new connections
- Emotional support
- Day to day advice



Courses

Do you fancy abseiling in your wheelchair, racing your friends in a canoe, toasting marshmallows by the campfire, or exploring a new city? You can give all these things a go on one of our residential activity courses.

Whatever your level of injury, every trip away with Back Up gives you the chance to:

- Push yourself and be more independent
- Do something you never thought possible, like soaring through the trees on a zip wire
- Learn new wheelchair skills from other young people with a spinal cord injury
- Feel more confident about getting on with life and doing what you want to do.

If you're under 13 years of age, you will be accompanied by a parent or guardian. You can choose to bring a friend with you if you're a teenager.

Keep checking our website (backuptrust.org.uk) for the latest information about our courses for young people.



“I went on an UI8s course this summer and I learned lots. I loved the course and I'm still in touch with the friends I made on it. The course has been the highlight of my whole year!”
Luke, 17

“Both the girls loved it. Megan could do everything that Becky could do, and they could just be sisters again. It's given us closure on what has happened. We said goodbye to what Becky couldn't do and hello to what she can do now!”
Becky's mum



Life in education

Whether you are returning to school, starting nursery, moving onto college or considering university, you have the right to be included in all aspects of your education and have the same opportunities as everyone else.

“It helped having Andy from Back Up at the school meeting as we don't always feel heard. He helped us feel really listened to and supported.”

Bethany, 15



“Harry's school mates can now see that anything is a possibility for him!”

Harry's mum

We know that it can be scary going back into education after a spinal cord injury and there can be a lot to think about. We can help your teachers and tutors to better understand your needs and how best to support you by offering guidance, practical advice, and ensuring your voice is listened to.

We have a team of people with a spinal cord injury who can:

- Help your teachers and other students learn more about spinal cord injury
- Support your nursery, school, college, or university to make changes so you can get around easily
- Organise visits, attend school meetings, and deliver workshops and assemblies to raise awareness and understanding
- Make sure the right support is put in place to meet your needs and that staff and professionals listen to your voice, opinions and experience

How to get involved with Back Up

“What drives me most to volunteer for Back Up and to help others is the fact that I wouldn't be where I am now without their help. I wouldn't have independence, courage or motivation. And knowing I have a chance to help someone else gain these qualities is so important to me.”

Maisie, young volunteer

We want to hear from you! Volunteering with Back Up can help you develop new skills and build your confidence.

Ways to volunteer include:

- Teaching wheelchair skills to other young people
- Sharing your experiences about spinal cord injury to help someone else
- Group leading one of our courses



Youth advisory group

The best way to support children and young people is to ask them – that's why we have a great team of youth advisors who meet up twice a year to help shape all our activities for young people. You are the experts on this topic and we need you to ensure our services are relevant, fun and engaging!

Please get in touch with Ella on 020 8875 1805 or email her at ella@backuptrust.org.uk to find out more about becoming a youth advisor or any other volunteer role.








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