

Family Support Volunteer Role Description

Reports to: **Family Support Team Leader & Coordinators**

Purpose

At Back Up we understand that spinal cord injury can be devastating but we believe it needn't prevent anyone from getting the most out of life. The aim of this role is to help relatives (of newly injured people in particular) to feel understood and supported and to begin to see possibilities of a more positive, hopeful future after spinal cord injury.

Our values

Volunteering with Back Up, as with everything we do, takes place in the context of our values:

- We embrace challenge
- We have fun
- We build inclusive communities
- We are ambitious for each other

Key tasks

- Support relatives' events in spinal centres through talking and participating in group sessions, talking to relatives about your own experiences, listening if they want to talk within the session, and outlining support available from Back Up and other organisations as appropriate.
- Be a role model and an ambassador for Back Up
- Work closely with staff at the spinal centre to ensure they are happy with our input and that mutual feedback can be shared.
- Offer opportunities for family members to register for further support or information from Back Up so that we can stay in touch with them.
- Work closely and provide regular feedback to the Family Support Team.

The Person

- Able to empathise with others – patient, sensitive and considerate and able to use your own experience in a helpful way
- A positive, empathetic person who can build rapport and connection
- Encouraging, supportive and perceptive - able to identify the needs of others, an understanding of the range of issues that may come up and being comfortable handling emotionally sensitive information

- Aware of how to manage risks involved: discussing any concerns about someone's welfare or safeguarding straightaway; and looking after your own wellbeing too
- Excellent interpersonal skills including communication, listening and reasoning
- Friendly, approachable and enthusiastic with a good sense of humour
- Able to speak confidently in front of a group
- Respectful and able to keep information confidential
- Understanding of equal opportunities, confidentiality and data protection

Experience and Knowledge (desirable)

- Personal experience of/or has a family member who is a minimum of two years post injury
- Knowledge and experience of the wide variety of ways that people react to and cope with spinal cord injury; together with understanding of how to establish boundaries and build rapport with other relatives
- A close family member of someone with a spinal cord injury. (Previous or current experience as a Back Up Family Mentor is not a pre-requisite, but beneficial)
- Sound knowledge of Back Up services, vision, mission and values

Time Commitment

- Attend a 1 day training workshop running from midday to midday with an overnight stay
- Attending family support session in spinal units and/or virtually between 1-8 times per year

Support and opportunities provided

- Training will be given by attending a volunteer workshop, to support you as a Family Support Volunteer and to develop your skills to fulfil the role. Further development and training opportunities are offered annually
- Agreed expenses paid by Back Up
- Support and guidance from Family Support Team and other Back Up staff where applicable
- The chance to work as part of a dynamic team and to have a real impact on family members at an early stage, and to link them in with a lifelong network of support.

Other information

Back Up has safer recruitment procedures in place to manage risk when staff and volunteers are working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This role is subject to an enhanced DBS check and reference checks.

Please note you will not be providing any individual support to people outside of a family support session and will not be sharing your personal contact details with attendees.