

Chair Recruitment Pack 2023



Registered Charity Nos. 1072216 and SC040577 Company No. 3596996



Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming Back Up's Chair of Trustees. It is an exciting time to join us. We launched our [Transforming Lives](#) strategy in April 2021. This has seen us support even more people affected by spinal cord injury through a mix of services and online support. We are now looking at what comes next and have started the process of engaging around our 2025 – 2030 strategy.

We're looking for a dedicated Chair to play a vital role in the governance of this passionate and impactful charity as we look ahead to the future.

If you're successful in your application, you'll join our team of 11 existing trustees who come from a range of backgrounds with varied interests. They are, however, united by a common interest and passion: to transform the lives of people affected by spinal cord injury.

We'd particularly welcome applications from people affected by spinal cord injury.

If you still have questions after reading this, our contact details are on the last page. We look forward to hearing from you and good luck with your application.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Stevenson
Trustee Chair of Nomination Committee

Table of contents

- **Information about spinal cord injury and why we exist 4**
- **Our vision, mission & values 5**
- **About us 6**
- **About the Chair role 8**
- **Person Specification 9**
- **Next steps 12**



Information about spinal cord injury and why we exist

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.

Spinal cord injuries cause some loss of movement and feeling in the parts of the body below the level of the injury. If you damage 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.

Who and why

- There are an estimated 50,000 people in the UK living with a spinal cord injury
- Each year over 2,500 people are newly injured
- Every four 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
- Shorter spinal cord injury rehabilitation
- Difficulty accessing specialist spinal cord injury rehabilitation

These factors all affect people’s wellbeing, their capacity 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 & values

Our vision:

- A world where people affected by spinal cord injury can realise their full potential

Our mission:

- To deliver services that build confidence and 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
- **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.”

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 our range of in-person and online services were accessed 19,253 times. Our award-winning services are designed and delivered by people affected by spinal cord injury.

We offer wheelchair skills training, an accredited mentoring service, proactive telephone support, 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](#).

In 22/23 our income was £2,068,948. We have ambitious plans for growth.

Our user-led 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 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.

Peer support

At Back Up, peer support has always been a central part of our work. Many of our staff and volunteers are affected by spinal cord injury, and 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 Transforming Lives Strategy was launched in April 2021. Over 300 people helped us create our strategy and carve out the three goals which matter to those we support.

Living confidently - ensuring people with a spinal cord injury have the confidence and practical skills to live a full, independent life.

Thriving at any age – ensuring all people with a spinal cord injury can reach their full potential.

Staying connected – ensuring everyone affected by spinal cord injury can connect with someone in a similar situation, helping them achieve the goals that matter to them.

Throughout the strategy we have sought to support an increasing number of people with spinal cord injury and their family.

More information can be found by reading our [Transforming Lives Strategy](#) and [our annual reports](#).

Back Up strategy

2021 - 2025



About the role of Chair

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

All of our trustees (including the Chair) are volunteers who collectively have 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](#).

Being a trustee is a voluntary role, therefore unpaid, but reasonable 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.

Person Specification

Key Skills

- Ensuring the proper governance of Back Up's board
- Supporting Back Up's leadership team to develop strategy, business plans and financial budgets
- Giving oversight and guidance to Back Up's leadership team
- Knowledge of, and ability to carry out, the core responsibilities of being a charity chair
- Ability to work closely and constructively with the CEO
- Ability to think about the 'bigger picture' and longer term (5 years ahead) as well as think about the 'here and now' (being strategic versus being operational)
- Acting as an ambassador for Back Up, promoting our work
- Ability to comment, challenge or question in a way that is helpful, supportive and constructive
- Timely and clear communication

Qualifications and Experience (Essential)

- Knowledge of spinal cord injury (either through having a spinal cord injury, or being a family member of someone with spinal cord injury, or through professional experience)
- Experience as a trustee of a charity / not for profit organisation
- Knowledge and understanding of charity governance and legal responsibilities (A Chairs Compass, The Charity Governance Code, The Essential Trustee)

Qualifications and Experience (Desirable)

- Financial management / commercial skills (no financial qualifications needed)
- Board level leadership
- Experience of chairing an effective board (preferably in the third sector)

Personal Attributes

- Integrity and honesty
- Openness and accountability
- Impartiality and objectivity
- Ability to influence
- A demonstrable commitment to Back Up's aims and values
- A commitment to best practice in governance, through proactive learning and development
- Positive, reliable, enthusiastic and conscientious
- Collaborative team player, flexible and adaptable

Time Commitment

You will need to devote at least two days a month to the role which will include:

- Three and a half hourly board meetings four times a year, in SW London. These currently take place 6 – 9.30pm
- One to two away-days per year (full day, in person, previously always in London)
- Two-hour committee meetings (four times per year, online)
- One-hour meetings every fortnight with the Chief Executive (flexible, online / phone)
- Representing the Charity at various events and meetings with key stakeholders
- Thirty-minute agenda setting, prior to meetings

Time Commitment Continued

- Two to three hours reading and absorbing information ahead of board meetings
- Ad-hoc follow up to meetings – reading and commenting on minutes, carrying out any agreed actions
- Time for training

Length of Term

- A standard term for a Chair is three years
- A maximum of two terms can be served as Chair

Restrictions

- Over 18
- Not bankrupt
- Subject to satisfactory DBS check and references
- Not excluded by Companies House or Charity Commission
- Conflicts of interest that would be so significant as to undermine the role in general

Inclusive Communities

One of Back Up's values is to build inclusive communities. In the UK just c.450 people per year experience spinal cord injury who are from ethnic minority backgrounds, and people from these backgrounds are under-represented on our board. We'd especially like to encourage applications from candidates who are from ethnic minority backgrounds for this Chair role, or to register your interest with us for future Trustee positions.



Role Description

Role Description: Chair

Accountable to: The Board of Trustees, People affected by spinal cord injury
Charities Commission and Companies House

Summary:

Back Up Transforming Lives Strategy takes the charity through to 2025, increasing our reach and impact for people affected by spinal cord injury. The Board supports the vision and mission of the organisation so that people affected by spinal cord injury can realise their full potential and live the life they want.

Principle Role:

Vision and Mission

- To uphold the values of the charity, undertaking the duties of Chair 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 be accountable for the big decisions about Back Up's future

Board Leadership

- Chairing meetings ensuring they are timely, effective and focused at a strategic level
- Ensuring trustees are engaged and supported pre and post trustee meetings
- Undertaking annual trustee reviews
- Ensuring that decisions taken at meetings are collective and implemented

With the Chief Executive:

- Planning the annual cycle of board meetings and other general meetings where required

- Setting agendas for board and other general meetings
- Developing the board of trustees including induction, training, appraisal and succession planning
- Addressing conflict within the board and within the organisation, and liaising with the chief executive to achieve this

Compliance, quality and effectiveness

- Support development of policies that further the aims and objectives of Back Up and to monitor their success
- Support the CEO through regular contact
- Empower the Leadership Team to deliver the strategy
- Maintain good governance
- Working closely with the Vice Chair and Treasurer, sharing information and responsibilities as required to ensure a consistent level of effective support for trustees and the CEO at all times.
- 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

Other responsibilities

- Leading the process of supporting and appraising the performance of the CEO
- Sitting on CEO and Trustee appointment panel
- Representing Back Up at events and meetings, and acting as a spokesperson as appropriate

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 chair

So, it's time to apply.

The deadline for completing the application is Midnight on **Sunday 7th January 2024**

To apply, email our Chair of Remuneration and Nominations, Rebecca Stevenson at recruitment@backuptrust.org.uk with:

- 1) Your CV
 - 2) An accompanying letter explaining your reasons for applying and how you meet the person specification
- All applications will be reviewed against the role description and person specification by a small team of trustees and the CEO by (Friday 12th January)
 - 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.

Interviews

- If you have been shortlisted, you'll be invited for an online one-hour interview with two trustees and the CEO on **Thursday 1st February 2024 with a second round in person interview on Wednesday 7th February 2024**. Please advise us in your application if you cannot make these dates.



You can contact us:

To ask any questions or for an initial exploratory conversation reach our CEO at:
abigail@backuptrust.org.uk

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

Back Up, 4 Knightley Walk, London, SW18 1GZ.
Registered Charity No. 1072216 and SCO020577
Tel: 020 8875 1805 | Email: admin@backuptrust.org.uk | www.backuptrust.org.uk