

## EARLY VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FOLLOWING NEUROLOGICAL DISABILITY – SUMMARY OF SCI INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Early after a SCI, people required different types and amounts of wayfinding support to think about, to plan, and to action their vocational aspirations.

“There were so many unknowns at that stage that, of what I would recover, whether I would recover, and all these sorts of things, which is, you know, grey areas, so, but [EIVS provider] just maintained constant contact and, you know, just always had that thought of, ‘Look, when the time is right to actually start making a plan, we’ll make a plan,’ you know. But that initial contact was always good because it sowed a positive seed, you know, that this will be a plan, you know, ‘You will do this.’”

“I think it was very good talking to the [EIVR provider] about that whole process. I went from thinking, ‘Oh shit, my life’s over,’ to still having some hope and, and then it came to the stage, once I could get up and do a few steps and that took forever, but I started to think, ‘Yeah, I can do this.’ You know, I can, I can get there.”

“Hearing other people with spinal cord injuries, or other disabilities, have like gotten back their same jobs, or have gotten different jobs that they actually love more than their old job, it’s really inspiring. I’m like, ‘Well, that’s cool.’ ‘Cos that gives me hope that there is something out there for me to do that I might eventually like, or you know, gives me hope to go back to my same job, similar job.’”

### WHO WE COLLECTED INFORMATION FROM

INTERVIEWS WITH 30 PEOPLE WITH SCI WHO HAVE RECEIVED EARLY INTERVENTION VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (EIVR) SUPPORT FROM THE NZ SPINAL TRUST



- EIVR is provided flexibly to people in response to three key situations:
  1. the persons level of clarity (or not) about neurological and eventual functional status,
  2. their ability to return to the same employer in the same or similar role
  3. their degree of decision-making influence within their pre-SCI employment role.
- Early in the persons rehabilitation, EIVR focuses on **establishing relationships** until the person has greater clarity about their eventual functional status, and they are able to engage in future-focused conversations about their vocational aspirations. In these early interactions there is a strong focus on the **person with SCI taking the lead, setting the pace and exploring their sense of identity** about past and future vocational roles.
- Within EIVR conversations, it is helpful to have **discussions about what was possible vocationally for others who have experienced an SCI.**

- For those who can return to their previous employer, EIVR provides encouragement and support to **facilitate communication and planning for return to work.** The amount of support that is required is determined by the degree of influence that the person with SCI has within their work role.
- EIVR supports people who are returning to work to be **realistic about what the return-to-work process** will be like and how best manages anticipated challenges.
- For those who are not able to return to their previous employer and/or work role, EIVR supports the person with SCI to **explore options that will work for them and meet their vocational aspirations.**

### SOME KEY CONSIDERATIONS



- Timing of engagement was very important - too early and people may not be ready emotionally; too late and people may start losing hope.
- Most participants found it useful to explore all their options with vocational consultants so they could make the best decision with all information available.
- If they were not able to self advocate, the vocational consultant was able to support them and sometimes advocate for them.
- Overall, there was a lot of uncertainty for people following a disability, but vocational rehabilitation reduced uncertainty

### NEXT STEPS

We will use these findings to do two main things:

1. We will work with the NZST to ensure that they have heard your feedback about what has worked well (and not so well).
2. We are moving on to the next phase of the research, using your responses to help plan an EIVR service for people who have had a stroke and want to go back to work.

### WHERE CAN YOU FIND MORE INFORMATION?

As the findings from this study are published, we will link to them via the BAIL website ([www.burwood.org.nz](http://www.burwood.org.nz)). We will also be sharing results on our Facebook page.

Contact BAIL ([admin@burwood.org.nz](mailto:admin@burwood.org.nz)) if you would like further information or would like someone from BAIL to present findings to your organisation or group.