

Information for Mothers/Caregivers

History and overview:

The Big Buddy mentoring programme is a Charitable Trust and has been operating since 1997. Registered with the Charities Commission (CC22447) and a CYF's approved service provider, Big Buddy is based on the simple philosophy that boys need good male role models in their lives, supporting them to become well rounded men. Big Buddy believes boys learn through modelling and while there are many exceptions, in general terms, a boy without a male role model to assist his development can be inherently at risk.

Big Buddy recruits men from the community (through various means of advertising), screens them to ensure they are men of good character and suitable to meet the needs of the programme, and matches them for at least 12 months as mentors to boys who don't have their natural father or another significant positive male in their life.

The Programme:

The Big Buddy mentor commits to spend 2-3 hours a week with a boy or adolescent (Little Buddy, aged 7-14) for at least a year, and our vision is that this will grow to a life-long relationship. The Big Buddy will pick up/drop off the boy, taking him out for an activity (of low or no cost), typically kicking a ball round a park, fishing, walking on the beach, fixing a car, making something, going to the museum or simply hanging out together. The content of the outings is not important - just showing up regularly and being there is the most important gift a Big Buddy gives. A regular weekly phone call adds continuity to the relationship.

The idea is simple yet profound in its reach. It involves a good man showing up every week into a boy's life, assuring him another man cares for him and giving him a model of what it means to be a good man.

Criteria for boys:

Typically, boys who are matched to Big Buddies come from a background where a mother/caregiver fully endorses and supports the idea of a relationship being developed between a male from outside the family over a period of time. This comes with the guidance/resources of the Big Buddy organisation, however the relationship is mainly driven by a mother/caregiver and the Big Buddy mentor.

Criteria for boys becoming Little Buddies include:

- 7-14 years old
- Little or no contact with natural father or other significant males in his life
- Boy is interested/motivated to have a Big Buddy
- Mother/Caregiver is in full support of a Big Buddy relationship
- Boy has no significant mental/emotional/physical health issues
- An understanding there will be a waiting period to find a mentor once the boy is accepted onto the programme



Matching a boy

Once we have had a conversation with a mother/caregiver and we have established their boy(s) fit the criteria we can send out an application. Once we receive an application back we will contact the boy's father by phone (if applicable). If we can proceed from here, we will conduct a home interview with a mother/caregiver and boy and establish that the boy wants a mentor and is 'matchable'. The boy will then go on a waiting list and when a suitable mentor is found we will have a discussion with a mother/caregiver about the mentor to establish compatibility. If both parties feel they may be compatible, a match meeting with the potential Big Buddy mentor and the Coordinator will happen at the boy's home with the mother/caregiver present. If all goes well, a match is established and the 'Little Buddy' and 'Big Buddy' will begin meeting regularly.

All matches start with a 3 month trial, with regular phone contact by the Coordinator to both a mother/caregiver and mentor to make sure things are going well. After 12 months of regular meeting, all parties are contacted and in most cases the relationship continues on as normal.

Mentor Screening

Big Buddy has continued to develop a leading edge approach to recruiting men and has built a rigorous screening process that all volunteers go through before they are accepted as mentors.

This involves an 8-10 week assessment of each applicant.

- Orientation phone call or face to face meeting
- Consent to contact 4 character referees:
 - Female blood relative (not mother)
 - Employer (Known at least 2 years)
 - Friend (Known at least 5 years)
 - Wife/Partner (if applicable)
- Full Police check (Exception to Clean Slate Act)
- Consent to send questionnaire to Doctor/GP
- Home interview (Up to 2 hours)
- Induction/Training evening
- Psychological assessment (Conducted by an independent psychotherapist outside the organisation)

The application will then go through an appraisal process conducted by the Coordinator and Team Leader or CEO (so it is not a personal decision by one person) to determine accepting/declining an application.

Real Big Buddy Stories:

To get a flavour of actual matches and success stories in our community, go to

<http://www.bigbuddy.org.nz/newsletter.aspx> and read through some touching and fun stories, the real impact our Big Buddies are having on our boys.

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