



## INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL MENTORS

### **Introduction**

Thanks for being prepared to explore what it would take to become a Big Buddy and start mentoring a boy who does not have a positive male role model in his life.

As a potential mentor, you'll start by going through our leading-edge application and screening process. This takes 8-10 weeks. If accepted, we will match you with a Little Buddy - a boy whose father is absent from his life, and aged between 7 and 14 years old.

While there is a 3-month trial period, you really need to think of making a commitment of at least one year. In the first year, you will need to meet weekly, on the weekends, and keep in contact via phone during the week to arrange the next meeting. You would normally pick the Little Buddy up from his home and go out somewhere.

This is a good chance to explore the world, do some of your favourite things, or try new things you haven't had the time or inclination to do. You don't need to 'entertain' your Little Buddy; most of the mentoring work happens by simply hanging out together. Most Buddies see the relationship lasting for a lifetime, and it will change as you go along. You may see more or less of each other over time, but both of your lives will be different for having met each other.

While we stay in contact with you and offer support, we do not expect you to report to us, achieve goals or do anything other than just show up regularly and be a positive influence. There is the opportunity to meet with other Big Buddies regularly, and at least once a year we all get together for a Big Buddy Day Out.

### **How We Select**

Our screening & application process involves several stages.

We really appreciate your patience while we work through all the checks and measures in the application forms. We need to be sure you are a man of good character who will be a sound, reliable role model to a Little Buddy.

Because volunteer mentors have to be able to commit to spending 2-3 hours a week (on weekends) with their Little Buddy for at least a year, the first thing we need to establish is that you can make that kind of commitment.

Secondly, we need to make sure you understand the aims of the programme before making a

commitment. If you're on board with these requirements, we'll get you to fill out an Application Form, which includes you nominating family, personal and professional character references. We will talk to them, get a reference from your doctor and, for obvious reasons, we will run a Police Check.

Next you will have a one off training & induction session; this is a chance to meet other men undergoing the same processes as you, and for us to talk further about our philosophy around mentoring. This is followed by a personal interview at your home, and a further interview with our clinical assessor.

Finally, the coordinator will conduct a peer review with a senior staff member and you will be notified of the outcome. If you are accepted as a Big Buddy, a 'match' is negotiated between you and the mother/ caregiver of a Little Buddy. Then you're away! You and your Little Buddy will begin meeting weekly, starting with the 3-month trial.

You'll receive regular phone calls from your Coordinator and have access any other support you need; if a problem crops up that you can't handle, we're only a phone call away.

This first phase of making a difference to the life of a fatherless boy takes a little time and we thank you for bearing with us. We can guarantee the rewards of mentoring will outweigh the time-rich process of becoming one!

**While we have a dedicated FAQ's page on our site, we offer some more specific answers for men who are ready to take the next step:**

### **FAQ's**

**Q: I'd like to become a Big Buddy but I already have my own children. Is this ok?**

A: It depends on how old your children are and how you manage your time. Remember a Little Buddy will need your full individual attention for 2-3 hours each weekend plus travelling time. If you can give him this as well as comfortably spend time with your own children, then that's fine. However, we recommend that you discuss it with your children and get their support before committing to becoming a mentor.

**Q: What part would my partner/spouse play in this?**

A: So long as you remember the primary relationship will be between you and your Little Buddy then your other relationships will find a 'right place'. It is important, however, that your partner/spouse is supportive of you being a Big Buddy mentor.

**Q: I'd like to become a Big Buddy. Does it make any difference if I am single or married?**

A: No - we are more interested in who you are than who you are with or what your relationship status is.

**Q: What sort of backgrounds do the boys come from?**

A: All sorts! Obviously single parent families; they usually live with their mother, but sometimes their grandmother or other family member, or caregiver. Some of them have had relatively easy lives,

while others have had it tougher but the common thing they all share is that they have no father in their life. When we negotiate the match, we tell you all we know of the boy's background and let you make the decision.

**Q: Can I talk to someone who is already a Big Buddy?**

A: Sure - we can put you in contact with an experienced Big Buddy.

**Q: Does it cost the Big Buddies money?**

A: No. We encourage keeping the outings low or no cost, but if there are larger costs, you can negotiate with the boy's mother/caregiver to contribute. It really is your decision but you are not expected to pay for everything.

**Q: How long do the mentoring relationships last for?**

A: We have a very good success rate. Some don't work, for a variety of reasons, but most (85-90%) last well beyond the first year.

**Q: Why don't some matches work?**

A: People have to move cities for work or family or sometimes illness is a factor in a match ending. Occasionally, either buddy discovers that mentoring is not for them.

**Q: What about religious/cultural preferences?**

A: We make no judgements either way but if religious or cultural preference is important to either party in the relationship, we take that on board in matching men and boys.

**Q: You do a police check? I got into some trouble when I was young and silly. Will that affect my application?**

A: We take a lot into consideration - the police check is just one of them. Obviously if you have a long record of violence and crime we will have doubts about you being a mentor but in the end we make a call that is based on the bigger picture of who you are.

**Q: Can I do activities with the Little Buddy at my house?**

A: The short answer is yes. However, you will need to establish trust with the Little Buddy and his mum/caregiver first. Then it can be a good thing for him to see how you live, meet your spouse/partner and children, if you have them. We still encourage getting out and about as much as possible.

**Q: You say the mentor has to spend 2-3 hrs a week with the Little Buddy. What if I can't do that?**

A: We ask that you meet on a weekly basis and usually in the weekends. In the first 12 months it is important to establish this regular contact. The main emphasis here is consistency and communication. You will miss the odd weekend due to being away or sick, but a mid-week phone call to maintain the relationship will build trust and provide stability for the boy. Over time, the match becomes more natural.

**Real Big Buddy Stories:**

For a deeper understanding of the positive impact mentoring has on our boys, read a range of success stories on [Facebook](#) or on our [website](#) .There are plenty of compelling and entertaining accounts of how Big Buddies are helping our boys.

**We look forward to helping you help boys whose fathers are absent from their lives**

**Contact us today**

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