



Becoming a Big Buddy Mentor

Introduction

Thanks for looking at how you can become a Big Buddy volunteer mentor, and make a difference for a boy who doesn't have a father in his life.

The first step is an application/screening process (there are intakes each month). After completion and if you are accepted, you are matched up with a Little Buddy - a boy aged 7-14, generally living with his mum or other caregiver.

The initial commitment is to be available for at 12 months. Once everyone agrees to the match, there is a 3-month trial period to check that the match is working for all parties. During this year, you meet weekly on the weekends, and keep contact via phone during the week to arrange/confirm the next meeting. Sometimes you can't make it, perhaps you are on holiday, one of you may be ill, or some event means you can't get there on that particular weekend. We need you to communicate about that in advance.

You normally pick your Little Buddy up from his home and go out somewhere. It's a good chance to explore the world, do some of your favourite things, or his, maybe try things you haven't had time for before. You don't need to entertain each other; just hanging out together is fine.

Once the match has been going a while, most Big Buddies report that the 'task' of volunteering drops away and replaced by a developing friendship that in a lot of cases can last many years. The relationship will change as you go along and you may see more or less of each other after the first year, but both of your lives will be different for having met each other.

We stay in contact with you and offer support and we also ask you to stay in contact and respond to us. However there is no need to change the boy or achieve any particular goals other than just showing up regularly. There is also the opportunity to meet regularly with other Big Buddy mentors and to attend Big Buddy run events as well as other smaller events that may be organised by our partners/sponsors.

The Application process

Here is an outline of the steps involved. They may seem lengthy, but don't be put off by the process – the fact is we do have to be very sure you are a man of good character, who will be a safe and reliable role model to a Little Buddy.

Because volunteer mentors 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 be available for that commitment.

Secondly, we need to make sure you understand the aims of the programme before making a commitment. If you are on board with these requirements, we email/post you an Application Form to be completed and returned. You nominate character references, (family, personal and professional) and we speak with them later. You give permission for us to obtain a reference from your doctor, and for obvious reasons, to do a Police Check.

Next we'll invite you to a Training/Induction evening, a chance to meet other men in the same process as you, where we talk further about our philosophy around mentoring. This is followed by us getting to know you in a home interview at your place of residence. The final step is for you to have an interview with a clinical assessor at their office.

When this is completed, the Mentoring Manager conducts a peer review with senior staff/management, and you will be notified of the outcome – hopefully, acceptance onto the programme.

A 'match' is negotiated between you/us and the caregiver of a Little Buddy, and we all meet to get things started. Then you're away – you and your Little Buddy start meeting weekly on the 3 month trial. You are supported with regular phone calls and any other support you may need; if a problem crops up that needs attention, we are only a phone call away.

Fortunately, we can guarantee the rewards of mentoring will outweigh the process of becoming one!

For more information go to our [Website](#) or find us on [Facebook](#)

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 and spend time with your own children, fine. It is good to discuss it with your children (and partner/spouse as well) and get their buy in 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.

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 regular 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 to contribute. It really is your decision what you do, 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, and a few men or boys discover 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 this 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 of things into consideration - police vetting is just one of them. Obviously if you have a long record of violence and crime, we will have concerns about you being a mentor but in the end we make a call on it based on the bigger picture of who you are now.

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

A: Give it time but yes. You will need to establish trust with the Little Buddy and his mum/caregiver first and then it's a good thing for him to see how you live, meet your spouse/partner and children if you have them. We still encourage mainly 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 with 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.