Parent/Carer/Professional Information on the Buddy Scheme

Buddy/Volunteer Coordinator North
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What is a Buddy?
A Buddy is a young person who offers peer support to a child/young person, aged 6 and above with additional needs, to be supported in accessing community activities, for a specific period of time.

Buddies are employed as casual workers by North Somerset Council. They have a contract of employment, are paid an hourly rate and are covered by employment law. They are young people with other commitments which need to be considered e.g. school and college work; particularly before and during school/college exam time.

What experience/training does a Buddy have?
Buddies generally start out as volunteers at our specialist play schemes. The young people who have potential to become Buddies are asked to volunteer on a regular basis on trips and activities and help at after school clubs, to gain experience.

The Buddy/Volunteer Co-ordinators run training for Buddies which includes Safeguarding and Positive Play.

Training, specific to the needs of the child/young person they are linked with may also take place to enable the Buddy to have a better understanding of the disability.

What is the eligibility criteria for the Buddy Service?
An up to date assessment is required, which will provide the Disabled Children’s Resource panel with an understanding of the child’s needs. Assessments that will be accepted are: An EHCP plan, a care plan, a consistent handling plan, an I.E.P., a behaviour plan, an Early Help assessment, a Single Assessment from a social worker.
The Request for a Buddy form should also clearly identify the support required, and the outcome hoped for.

How can I request a Buddy?
A Buddy referral request form should be requested, completed and returned to the Daycare team, via The Firs or St. Barnabas (addresses on front page); or via the Single Point of Access on 01934 888801. The referral form can be found on the local offer http://nsod.n-somerset.gov.uk/kb5/northsomerset/directory/service.page?id=XFilRhEaSpM&localofferchannel=0

ALL REQUESTS AND ASSESSMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED ONE WEEK BEFORE THE PANEL DATE IN ORDER TO PREPARE NECESSARY PAPERWORK FOR THE PANEL. PANEL DATES ARE GENERALLY ON THE FIRST WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH

Function of the panel
Members consist of: Community Family Service Leader (Chair), DCT Team manager, Service Improvement manager CCG, Senior Children’s Placement officer, Contractors and Commissioning Officer, Daycare Development Team member, and a Business Support Officer.
The panel will discuss each request, look at the additional information, and consider the appropriateness of the support needed.
Requests for support to access community based clubs/activities, which support a child spending time with a peer group will be looked on favourably. However, developing independent life skills, including use of public transport/shopping etc may also be appropriate.
There is a fixed annual budget available for Buddies, and the panel has to make the most effective use of this budget.
How much support can my child have from a Buddy?
The panel will agree an allocation of Buddy hours, dependent on the needs of the child and the activity specified i.e. 2-3 hours for a child to be supported in attending a club, or up to a maximum of 6 hours to support independent living activities, such as using public transport. Funding for a Buddy is initially awarded for a 6 month period. This is to ensure that the budget is being allocated to support developing the outcomes for the child. This does not mean that funding will not continue; however, if required, a review of the service at the 6 month point will need to be submitted to the panel for discussion.

How will my child be linked to a Buddy?
Once the panel has made their decision, you will be advised, either by the referrer, or by the Buddy/Volunteer Coordinator. Your child’s name will then be put on the Buddy waiting list. It is not a first come first served process. Buddies are matched to a young person based on the following considerations:
- Sharing similar interests
- Availability
- Area where both the Buddy and young person live
- Gender
- Overall appropriateness of the match
- Risk assessment for the activity stated in the request.

BUDDY LINK PROCESS

Once linked what are my responsibilities as the Parent/Carer?
- Please ensure that you have appropriate phone numbers of the Buddy and the Buddy/Volunteer Coordinator in case of an emergency and general ongoing communication (this will be done at the Buddy introduction)
- Should you wish the Buddy to take your child to an activity which is not free, you are responsible for paying for your child and your child’s Buddy, and for any entrance fees/travel costs for the Buddy (if they do not get in free as a carer)
- As a parent/carer, you are responsible for letting the Buddy know if your child is unwell or does not want to go out with the Buddy.
- The Buddy/Volunteer Co-ordinator must be informed if you are not happy with the Buddy your child is linked with.
- The Buddy/Volunteer Co-ordinator must be informed if the Buddy does not turn up without letting you know.
- If you wish to make changes to the agreement, you will need to contact the Buddy/Volunteer Co-ordinator to discuss and change this agreement in writing before asking the Buddy to carry out the new duties.
- Some of our buddies are able to drive. However they are not insured by North Somerset Council and therefore will not be able to use their cars to transport your child.

We will support you throughout the Buddy process, to ensure that both the North Somerset Buddy scheme, and the parent/carer, are confident that this is the correct service.

If you have somebody in mind, who could support your child, you may find that having a Direct Payment would be more suitable. Please look at the Local Offer for more information (details above).