**BUDDY (EMOTIONAL SUPPORT) VOLUNTEERS**

The charity supports parents and grandparents with child contact problems through a Helpline support service, online video support meetings, and monthly face to face support meetings (when Covid issues permit).

**The Buddy Roles are pivotal roles in the development of the charity expanding our emotional support services through peer mentoring and the introduction of the Buddy scheme.**

**ROLE DESCRIPTION: BUDDIES LEVEL 1 (GENERAL BUDDIES)**

* Our new service users will be feeling isolated, fearful and alone; your job is to make them feel befriended and less alone, and hence improve their mental condition.
* Provide emotional support at group meetings organised by the charity in their local area; listen/empathise.
* Engage in group discussions to empathise with and support service users and to ensure that they retain their focus on the best interests of the children.
* Support service users via the closed Facebook Buddy Group. Encourage participation. Be empathic. Read / listen.
* Undertake on-going contact with service users to ensure their retention within the charity’s services.
* Assist the Buddy Coordinator in planning, organising and attending social events as part of the emotional support to service users and their families.
* Observe the boundaries set by the charity in supporting individuals.
* In general, Level 1 Buddies will **NOT** have one-on-one meetings or communications with service users.
* In particular, Buddies shall **NOT** offer advice to service users, especially legal advice.

**EXPERIENCE / SKILLS REQUIRED**

* Essential: Excellent interpersonal skills
* Essential: Ability to empathise with service users who may be emotionally vulnerable
* Desirable, not essential: Experience of emotional support and mental health first aid
* Desirable, not essential: Counselling / peer mentoring skills – ideally qualified or studying for a qualification in counselling or psychology.

**ROLE DESCRIPTION: BUDDIES LEVEL 2 (DEDICATED/SPECIALIST BUDDIES)**

* Level 2 (Dedicated/Specialist) Buddies differ from Level 1 (General Buddies) in that they will provide personal one-on-one support to an individual service user who is deemed to require particular attention.
* The purpose is to encourage more regular exchanges between the Buddy and the individual service user whilst that is beneficial.
* The charity’s Buddy-email system will be used for exchanges between the supported service user and the Buddy, to ensure auditability.
* Dedicated/Specialist Buddies will be provided with a charity mobile.
* Depending upon experience and confidence, and subject to prior agreement with the Buddy Coordinator or National Manager, a Dedicated/Specialist Buddy may accompany the service user at relevant child-related meetings (with social workers, etc).

**EXPERIENCE / SKILLS REQUIRED**

* As for Level 1 Buddies, PLUS…
* A Level 2 (Dedicated/Specialist) Buddy will have served as a General Buddy for a substantial period of time to gain the necessary experience OR be able to offer equivalent experience gained elsewhere.
* Authorisation as a Level 2 Buddy will be carried out by “interview” with the Buddy Coordinator and an experienced Level 2 Buddy. For suitably experienced candidates, the Induction interview may fulfil this purpose.
* Authorisation of a Level 2 Buddy to assist a service user by attendance at formal meetings (with social workers, etc.) will be approved by the Buddy Coordinator or the National Manager on an individual basis subject to the Buddy’s experience.

**TIME COMMITMENT**

* Commitment to an agreed number of hours of volunteering time (suggested minimum of 2 hours per week) IN ADDITION to attendance at a minimum of 6 support meetings per year.
* Commitment to attend training.

**SUPERVISION**

You will be supervised by the charity’s Buddy Co-ordinator at FNF Both Parents Matter Cymru and, in respect of the conduct of support meetings, by the Branch Lead of the charity who runs the appropriate local support meeting.

**TRAINING**

Essential Pre-Deployment

All new volunteers who are to be assigned designated roles (as listed in the Volunteer Roles document) must be given an Induction prior to being deployed. This Induction can be carried out by any member of the Management Team. A common set of briefing material exists for this Induction, regardless of role.

For volunteers to be newly assigned to a Buddy role (Level 1 or 2), training in the requirements of the role, consistent with the above descriptions, must be provided prior to being deployed in that role. A set of briefing notes exists to provide the required scope of this training. The training shall be carried out by the Buddy Coordinator or an experienced Level 2 Buddy, and shall provide the candidate with the opportunity to ask questions to ensure the nature of the role is understood. In practice this training may be carried out at the same time as the Induction.

Desirable Within Deployment

External or online training is desirable to enhance Buddies’ skills in the following areas (and according to the identified needs of the individual): Dealing with emotional trauma / empathic responding; Mental health first aid; Keeping calm & focussed when faced with anxious clients; Listening skills / open questions; Being non-judgmental / unconditional emotional support; Developing a relationship / expressing concern; Validating service users lived experience (thoughts & emotions); Observing boundaries in dealing with service users; Setting boundaries for service users; Keeping yourself safe.