

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the buddy service?

The buddy service links people with a trained volunteer who offers practical support to help them connect with the outside world and their community.

The eventual aim is to give clients more confidence to engage with their interests. The service is time limited and focused on the achievement of specific goals.

The buddy service aims to:

- **Link clients** with a **trusted buddy** with whom they can develop a relationship and who offers **practical support** to help them achieve their goals.
- **Promote self-management** through the use of **person-centred** methods and an **empowering approach** that involves clients in the goal setting process.
- **Support** clients to access other services and groups being offered by the **Community and Voluntary Sector**.
- **Utilise the power of volunteering** trained volunteers bring with them a huge range of **life experience**. Also, the benefits for the client in knowing the volunteer **wants to spend time** with them and is not being paid can have huge value.

### What types of client goals are supported?

A range of individual client goals can be supported. This could be attending an arts and craft group or an exercise class, going to choir practice, going to a local allotment or going for a walk around the local park. The client should come to the service with an identified goal in mind.

### How long is a client supported by the buddy service?

Typically, a volunteer will meet with a client for up to 6 sessions. However sometimes buddying can take longer to work and will require further sessions. This might mean meeting on the doorstep for the first visit and going for a walk to the park the next time.

### Who can make a referral and how?

All referrals to the buddy service are required to go through the Together Co Social Prescribing referral process. This enables a full Social Prescribing assessment to understand the person's whole situation and undertake further linking in as needed. [Please see the Together Co Social Prescribing information pack for further information on how to refer and the referral criteria.](#)



### **Who should be referred to the buddy service?**

Individuals who: are socially isolated; want to take up a social activity or hobby; have *mild* depression, anxiety or stress; want to volunteer or return to work; are carers or have a long-term physical health condition. [Please see the full referral criteria in the Social Prescribing information pack.](#)

### **Who cannot be referred to the buddy service?**

A person who is unlikely to engage effectively or appropriately with a volunteer to make steps towards their goal, e.g. people with very complex needs, who are eligible for support from secondary care mental health or a recovery worker, have a dementia diagnosis, have just been released from prison or are known to be violent. [A full list of screening questions is available in the Social Prescribing information pack and if in doubt, please call us.](#)

### **Can individuals self-refer?**

Individuals cannot self-refer to the Buddy Service but maybe able to access the Buddy Service through the Together Co Social Prescribing Service. [Please see the Together Co Social Prescribing information pack for further information on this service.](#)

### **How does the buddy service help?**

There is evidence that a buddy service can help to build people's confidence and willingness to engage in new activities. In addition, through supporting people to connect with their community, it has shown to improve feelings of empowerment and reduce feelings of loneliness.

We demonstrate that clients achieve:

- Improved independence
- Increased confidence
- Reduced risk of, or actual, isolation
- Improved wellbeing and quality of life

**“My buddy was very helpful; Anna increased my confidence and supported me to be able to go out on my own.”**

**In 2021-22 we matched 70 clients with volunteers**

## How We Work & Client Stories

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<p><b>Initial telephone assessment with a Social Prescribing Link Worker</b></p> <p>Link Worker agrees goal with client</p> <p>Social Prescribing service offered if required</p>	<p><b>Client matched with appropriate volunteer buddy</b></p> <p>Agreed goal confirmed with client and volunteer</p> <p>Number of sessions agreed, typically around 4-6 sessions</p>	<p><b>Client and buddy meet for sessions</b></p> <p>Volunteer regularly reports back on progress</p>	<p><b>Goal achieved</b></p> <p>Buddy support ends</p> <p>Check in with client within 2-4 weeks of service ending</p> <p>Client referred for further support if appropriate</p>

### Pat - Goal: To leave the house

Pat is a retired nurse in her 70s who had a fall just before lockdown, and had been using walking sticks to get out and about. She had recently been given a new 'walker', but hadn't used it as she felt too nervous to go out on her own. She had spent months not going out and her legs were now weaker due to lack of exercise.

After going out a few times with our buddy Jane, Pat said she felt much more confident than she had expected and that it was just knowing someone was alongside her. Jane and Pat met once a week and each time Pat went further. After three weeks, Pat set a new goal of getting to her local shop so she could buy a few groceries.

### Fran - Goal: To feel more connected to her community.

Fran is 42 and works in the NHS; she moved to Brighton just before lockdown in March 2020. Due to the timing of the pandemic, Fran never had the chance to connect to her new community and as a result became low, anxious, and withdrawn and was eventually signed off work.

Work was Fran's only connection to people, and without it she was left feeling isolated and stuck. Fran agreed to taking part in the buddy scheme if she could meet up with someone informally to speak conversational French. Fortunately, one of our buddies is a French speaker, and Fran and Jo have since met up walking around Fran's neighbourhood speaking in French. Fran is now back at work and says she is coping much better, and will engage more with her community once her confidence levels have risen.

## Jill - Goal: To get to a new art group

Jill had been suffering from anxiety for some time, which meant she had not been connecting with other people or enjoying her hobbies. She told us that she missed having opportunities to be creative, and when she learnt about a new local art group she decided she would really like to attend.

Unfortunately, when the day of the art group came, Jill felt too anxious to go into the venue where the group was meeting. She agreed to be supported by a buddy next time, who met her at the bus stop and went to the first class with her. Jill felt more able to join the group, and agreed that her buddy would leave 15 minutes before the end of the next session. Over the next few meetings her buddy left earlier each time, and now Jill feels confident to go to the group independently.

## The chart below shows the different activities buddy volunteers provided support with in 2020 and 2021.

The chart shows a lot of reablement due to the impact of the pandemic and the fact that many groups and activities were unable to run during this time.

