

# The ULHT Buddy Programme

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***Building an unstructured & informal  
peer-to-peer learning & support community.***

***Conceived and developed by Simon Mark Daley***



# What is it?

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Two staff members **informally supporting** one-another. At the most basic level, it's about **making friends and learning** from each other.

An established/experienced member of staff is paired with another staff member who may either be **new to post**, may feel **unsupported or under-prepared** in their role, feel **professionally isolated**, or may just welcome the opportunity to get the occasional coffee with someone that they can **confide in** (sometimes it's easier to talk with someone with whom you don't have a direct personal/professional relationship).

This doesn't mean this is a one-way relationship though, there are **benefits for both parties...**

# What are the benefits?

## EASE TRANSITION INTO NEW ROLES

New jobs can be nerve-wracking. “Buddies” help colleagues **learn the basics**, understand workplace culture and answer any questions that staff might otherwise be too embarrassed to ask!

## MAKE FRIENDS/ DEVELOP A PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK

The workplace can be a **stressful** environment – particularly within healthcare. Many people will develop friendships amongst those with whom they work, but this comes much less easily to others. Some staff work on the nurse bank and aren’t in one place long enough to develop close friendships, and some roles are extremely **isolating** by their nature.

## INFORMAL LEARNING

Buddy systems encourage **informal learning**; developing skills through social interaction and observation. Communicating with and observing another individual is an effective way to learn – 20% of what we know is learnt in this way. This is the perfect opportunity to **develop skills** and - equally important - **confidence**.

## INCREASED CONFIDENCE THROUGH RECOGNITION

The buddy system provides a supportive relationship where staff can openly discuss their progress and gain **constructive criticism and recognition**. This is important, with 76% of people saying that peer praise is extremely or very motivating. These pep talks help keep staff **motivated, engaged and progressing**.

# What are the benefits?

## IMPROVED STAFF RETENTION

For most people, their favourite jobs aren't determined by money or status, but by feeling **part of a team** – colleagues make or break happiness and job satisfaction. Millennials repeatedly name “friendly-co-workers” as 1 of their top 3 sought-after workplace features. Buddy systems foster a friendly/happy workplace and increase **staff retention**.

## CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We are all mandated to demonstrate CPD in our roles, as part of our **professional registration**. A buddy system offers the perfect opportunity to **reflect on practice** and experience. This reflection can be utilised as **evidence** for revalidation, mentorship/leadership programmes, and more.

## BOOST PRODUCTIVITY

Having friends at work makes us 50% **happier**, and happy workers are 12% **more productive**. Not only that, friendship at work supports knowledge sharing within the organisation, which **increases productivity and innovation**. Work friendships encourage better employee communication and collaboration and establishes the foundations of **successful teamwork**.

# The ULHT Buddy Programme

## BUDDY LEVELS

In order to better find you a 'buddy' you will be categorised as either GREEN, BLUE or RED; with blues mostly pairing with blues & reds pairing with greens. If you have a strong opinion as to which of these applies to you, include this in your email..

### 'GREEN BUDDY'

Junior/ new to current role.

Feels unsupported/ under-developed.

Unsure how to progress.

Professionally isolated.

Lacking motivation.

Under stress and lacking strategies to manage this.

### 'BLUE BUDDY'

Comfortable in current role (may **not** be reflected by time in role).

Feels relatively supported/ developed.

Some idea how to progress.

Limited professional support.

Moderate motivation.

Stressed with some coping strategies.

### 'RED BUDDY'

Senior/experienced in current role.

Well supported/ developed.

Clear plan for how to progress.

Good, established professional support network.

Highly motivated.

Low stress levels/ good strategies for managing stress.



# How does it work?

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## 1 FLEXIBILITY

The beauty is that the system can be adapted by our staff and utilised in whatever way works for them.

## 2 COMPATIBILITY

Staff will be paired with someone with whom they have some job role compatibility, so that ward managers 'buddy up' with other ward managers and matrons with matrons, for example. This is intended to maximise the value of the pairing. For instance, even an experienced specialist nurse would likely be a less valuable buddy to a new-to-post ward manager than an experienced ward manager.



# How does it work?

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## 3 CONTACT

All you need to do is email [ulhtbuddy@gmail.com](mailto:ulhtbuddy@gmail.com) to indicate your interest. Send the details listed below, and when the programme goes live, you'll be paired with a suitable 'buddy', and notified via email.

## 4 DETAILS REQUIRED

Name / Age / Are you **offering support** as a buddy, or **looking to be supported**? / Current role and band / Hospital site / Speciality if applicable / Number of years in role / Number of years in ULHT/healthcare. If you'd like to add a few sentences about yourself/your interests, then this is welcome, but not mandatory. The more information we have about you, the better placed we are to find a suitable pairing.



UNDERSTANDING

# The ULHT Buddy Programme

## WHAT THE BUDDY PROGRAMME IS:

Mutually beneficial - both for staff members and the organisation.

Akin to informal clinical supervision.

Complementary to other support systems.

Socialising / making new friends that you would otherwise be unlikely to make.

Teaching / supporting / explaining / sharing insights.

Being available for one-another.

Good for both psychological and physiological well-being.

Maximum reward for minimum investment.

## WHAT THE BUDDY PROGRAMME IS NOT:

A replacement for your line-manager / formal managerial structure, or a replacement for the appraisal process.

Limited to newly qualified staff, or any specific staff group or type.

Going to interfere / conflict with your work commitments to ULHT.

Structured / inflexible. There isn't a set of rules or guideline, and no boxes to tick.

A commitment that you can't get out of if you realise that it's not working for you or if your circumstances change.



# What next?

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## REGULAR

We suggest that you try to meet at least **once per month**, but more or less frequently than this may work for you and your 'buddy'.



## RELAXED

Meet in an **informal** setting of **your choice**.

Some staff will feel more comfortable outside of work, whilst others may want to make time during their working day to meet on site.



## ENJOY!

With time you might find that your friendship has outgrown the buddy programme. That's great! We'll just be pleased to have been the **start of the journey!**



## PROBLEMS

You're not signing a contract, and this is meant to be a **positive experience**, so if anything about the programme doesn't work for you then let us know and we'll do our best to **resolve** any issues.

**If the programme still isn't for you, then that's OK too.**

# GETTING STARTED WITH **The ULHT Buddy Programme**

## WE RECOMMEND...

**Start slowly** - don't expect too much too quickly. You and your buddy need time to build a relationship from scratch. Plan to meet for an hour or so to get to know each other and understand your roles, and then meet again when you can/want to. Some people will want to meet every 1-2 weeks, whereas others may prefer 4-6 weekly. This will depend on work and personal commitments as well as individual preference, but try and develop a routine.

**Be open-minded** - you need to promote a safe, non-discriminatory relationship where you can both feel supported and comfortable. You are likely to be paired with someone that you would otherwise not spend time with, but this is one of the advantages of the programme.

**Establish your needs** - be clear with one another from the beginning what your needs are, and what you want to get out of the buddy programme - as well as what you feel that you can offer. This will maximise the benefits that both parties will gain. These needs may change over time, and your relationship will adapt to meet those needs.

**Establish boundaries** - both parties need to agree and feel comfortable with how you will communicate moving forward. Some may wish to arrange meet ups via email with lots of notice, others may prefer to text or call one another for ad hoc get-togethers. This may change over time, as you get to know each other; nothing is set in stone!

## WE DISCOURAGE...

**Competition** - the buddy programme is individual, and needs only to work for you and your buddy. It doesn't matter how often or where anyone else is meeting or how they're utilising the system for instance.

**Structure** - put your notepad away. This is not a formal process, and whilst we do facilitate and support it, the process needs to happen as naturally and fluidly as possible. Relax and be yourself.

**Gossip** - it almost certainly won't come straight away, but with time hopefully you will develop the ability to confide in your buddy and speak freely. The process won't work if there isn't trust that you can both speak in confidence.

**Pressure** - don't put too much pressure on yourself. Even if you are the more experienced buddy, you are not expected to know all of the answers, or be an expert. What is important is that you listen, support, and be available for one-another.

## GET IN TOUCH IF...

**Not working** - whilst simple and extremely flexible, the programme may not work for everyone. If something isn't working for you that you and your buddy can't resolve yourselves, then don't hesitate to get in touch right away. Don't try and force something that you don't feel comfortable with.

**Inappropriateness** - everyone communicates differently, and humour for instance, is an acknowledged coping mechanism. You and your buddy will soon learn what each other is comfortable with. There may however be an occasion where someone says something that makes you uncomfortable, such as a joke in poor taste, an unprofessional comment, or a potential breach of confidentiality. In such an incident you should first seek to resolve this with your buddy, with openness and with the benefit of doubt. It may however, be necessary to escalate an issue where you feel you have a duty of care (such as in cases of patient safety) - if you are unsure how to proceed, please ask.

**Feedback or questions** - if you have constructive criticisms; something that you think doesn't work or something that you think could be improved upon, then please get in touch. Better yet, get in touch with positive feedback too, it'll be gratefully received! If there's anything at all that you're not clear about, get in touch;

**ULHTbuddy@gmail.com**



# Questions..



If you have any questions/feedback regarding the buddy programme, please get in touch;

[ulhtbuddy@gmail.com](mailto:ulhtbuddy@gmail.com)