

The Buddy system

What is Changing Futures?

Changing Futures Cambridgeshire & Peterborough is about improving the outcomes for people with multiple disadvantage. This will be achieved by people with lived experience guiding professionals on how organisations across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough can work together more effectively and efficiently to tackle multiple disadvantage.

Multiple disadvantage means someone experiencing three of five of homelessness, mental health issues, substance misuse, domestic abuse and offending behaviour, at any one time

The buddy system is part of the Changing Futures approach because it aims to help people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage get more involved in the systems and services they use.

What is the Buddy system?

At the centre of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's *Changing Futures* programme is the notion that people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage should be directly working with decision-makers to design the systems and services they use.

We know that in many areas this already happens but equally we also know that in other areas people with lived experience are not represented. To take a system wide approach to service design and improvement it is essential that all parts of the system are represented.

To do this, we need people with lived or living experience to be represented at decision-making forums. We must make sure that the best value for this input is achieved and recognise the expertise that people who have used, are using or have been unable to use local services bring.

The Coproduction Group of experts have identified that for everyone attending strategic level meetings the option to buddy up with an existing member of that forum could help ensure they are best able to contribute.

Tips for a buddy

The Group has produced a set of tips and advice to help guide those who volunteer to act as a buddy to consider in that role:

- Support me to be myself
- Give me confidence to speak
- Help me prepare for the meeting
- Allow time to ask questions after the meeting
- Ensure I am an equal member of the group
- Be a consistent person for this task
- Treat me as an individual
- Listen
- Trust
- Be the buddy that you would want if you were in my position
- Feedback what my contribution has done or changed

Equally, there will be elements the buddy will gain from the relationship

- Direct connection to experts by experience
- Expertise that may not have been previously contributed
- Insight into other areas of work unrelated to the topic of the meeting
- Time to reflect with an expert in the field
- Opportunity to think about why we are doing what we do

The buddy relationship should be specific to each meeting. So an expert by experience may have several buddies if they attend multiple meetings; equally a buddy may assist several experts.

Neither expert nor buddy would be expected to work in other areas unless they mutually agree to do so. We anticipate the commitment would be to make a bit of time before and after each meeting, and to take time to 'get to know' one another to ensure best participation.

How does the *Changing Futures* programme help?

An initial partnership has formed with SUN Network and CPSL Mind to support the *Changing Futures* programme to promote and deliver the buddy system. The partnership is working on a process to identify and match experts and buddies. It will allow *Changing Futures* to facilitate the relationships, including supporting with any identified upskilling or any issues that the expert or their buddy, may have.

The *Changing Futures* programme team will monitor how effective the buddy system is working and adapt as we learn.

Useful links to learn more

- The **5 principles** for Changing Futures are to:
 - Recognise complexity
 - Build trust
 - Open doors (there is no wrong door)
 - Meet people where they are
 - Embrace learning
- **Read** more at our [web page](#)
- **Sign up** for 3-monthly newsletter using changing.futures@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
- **Join in...** This is a learning process, so please ask if you have questions or suggestions. You can find some [FAQs](#) here. Get your question added so others can benefit from your curiosity!