

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF HAVING A BUDDY

TOP TIPS:

- Think about what you want to get from participating in the buddy scheme. Before you meet/speak, note down a few things you want to talk about - concerns, things you want to ask your buddy's advice on.
- Try to be flexible on where/when you want to meet, it needs to work for both of you.
- Ask for their help if you need it - can you talk through a difficult on-call with them? Ask their advice on a work issue? If being an FY1 feels tough, talk about it. The likelihood is they'll have been there too or experienced something similar.
- Find out about them too, ask how they are - it's not a totally one-way relationship.
- Remember your buddy is a mentor and colleague. They are not your counsellor, doctor, best mate, parent etc. Please don't ask them for personal medical advice.
- They may sometimes signpost you to other sources of support, such as your own GP, your supervisor or other sources of specialist advice/support. This is a good thing - your buddy is recognising the limitations of how they can help you and are suggesting things that may be more useful to you than they can be, or more appropriate. It's not them rejecting you or saying they don't want to help.
- Avoid text speak in communication
- If you can, tell your buddy who your educational supervisor is, and anyone else in any support network for you. It's good for your buddy to know who else is helping you through your FY1, and if necessary, who to contact to ensure you get more support if you need it (with your permission unless immediate or safety concerns require breaking your confidentiality, which your buddy would explain to you).
- If you and your buddy end up working directly together, regularly or in the same team, it is **ESSENTIAL** that you contact us. We've heard last year that it can change the informal buddying relationship if the buddy becomes the FY1's supervisor or senior (and sometimes was quite difficult), that's not fair on you. We would want to support you in this situation and offer you another buddy you don't work with.

KEEP IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH YOUR BUDDY - ANSWER THEIR EMAILS OR MESSAGES

Please keep in contact with your buddy. If your buddy contacts you a few times and hears nothing, they will let us know. We will contact you to see if you still want to be part of the scheme. If we still don't hear from you, we will have to assume you don't want to be part of the scheme any more. We may re-allocate your buddy to another FY1.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T HEAR BACK FROM YOUR BUDDY

Don't expect an immediate response. Your buddy is a busy doctor too and won't always be able to reply quickly. If you haven't heard back after about a week, send them a polite reminder email or message. Give that a few days, then contact them by another means - if you already emailed, then send them a text message. If you whatsapped, then email etc.

If still no word, please email us info@fy1buddynetwork.co.uk. If needs be, we can allocate you a new buddy.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER FY1?

We're expecting most of you to only use the scheme for a year. Some may be an FY1 for longer (if you're less than full time or need to take time out during the year or need an extension to your time) and if so we'd hope you could arrange with your buddy to continue the support until the end of your FY1, whenever that is.

At the end of your time as an FY1, you need to have a conversation with your buddy about what happens next and agree this between you. You may wish to ask them to continue to be your buddy, and if they agree to this, just let us know so we can keep track of who's still involved in the buddy scheme. You may feel it is time to move on, maybe even become a buddy to an FY1 yourself.

Confirm your wishes with your buddy and thank them.

It is better to acknowledge the end of the mentoring process, rather than allow it to just lose momentum and the relationship to either fade away or become awkward. This ending of the mentoring relationship is a chance to:

1. Say goodbye and thank you, or
2. To redefine the relationship as colleagues or even friends, or
3. If the mentee chooses to request it and the mentor is happy to do so, to agree to continue the mentoring relationship for a new defined period of time, in which case the cycle continues. Either way, be deliberate and clear about this last step of the mentoring process.

OTHER PEER SUPPORT (please see the Useful Resources section of our website for more)

- Tea & Empathy <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1215686978446877/> (See the pinned post for regional Tea & Empathy groups)
- LTFT Trainees Forum <https://www.facebook.com/groups/852147548274259/>
- Doctors' Support Network (DSN) - A fully confidential, friendly, self-help group for doctors with mental health concerns. <https://www.dsn.org.uk/>