

Fife Gingerbread Buddy Network Evaluation: Volunteers' Experiences

Poverty Alliance Phase One Evaluation Report

The Poverty Alliance

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Key findings

- Volunteer buddies had a range of motivations for volunteering including supporting parents who are isolated or struggling, personal development and gaining experience for employment, previous engagement or awareness of the work of Fife Gingerbread and wanting to give something back.
- There was a consensus that the main aims of the buddying relationship were to build parents' confidence and reduce social isolation through building a non-judgemental relationship built on trust and reliability.
- Internal training, external training opportunities and support provided by Fife Gingerbread Volunteer Co-ordinators was instrumental to the positive experiences of volunteers. Buddies felt comfortable to raise issues with Co-ordinators and benefited from the opportunities to meet with other volunteers to discuss their experiences.
- Volunteer buddies' perceptions of the key outcomes for parents included increased self-confidence and independence, reduced social isolation/loneliness and improvements in dealing with anxiety.
- Similarly to the perceived impacts on parents, buddies felt that the experience of volunteering as a buddy had led to gains in confidence, opened up new social connections as well as opportunities for personal development and employment.
- The biggest challenge identified by buddies was managing their own commitments (e.g. work, family) around their volunteering. The initial matching process of a buddy with a parent was also identified as a challenge as some buddies had been nervous about whether the relationship would work. A couple of buddies gave examples of being matched with a parent which did not work out after the initial meeting. All the buddies reflected that they had felt completely supported by their Volunteer Co-ordinator during this process.

Introduction

In 2018, Fife Gingerbread received funding from the Big Lottery Fund to expand their network of trained, approved volunteer buddies to support vulnerable families across Fife for three years. Three Volunteer Co-ordinators were recruited, who each had a responsibility for a different area in Fife including: North East Fife, South West Fife, Glenrothes and Cowdenbeath.

The development of the buddy network was affected by a restructuring of Fife Gingerbread in early 2019. Each Volunteer Co-ordinator was given a new area with new volunteers which impacted on linking buddies with parents. The new areas included: Glenrothes and Leven, South West Fife/Dunfermline, and Kirkcaldy, Cowdenbeath and Lochgelly.

This report provides findings from the phase one evaluation of the buddy project focused on volunteers' experiences. Poverty Alliance would like to thank the Fife Gingerbread staff who assisted with conducting this research as well as the buddies who took part for sharing their views and experiences.

Overview of the buddy network

Funding for the buddy network started in June 2018 and was initially focused on developing the volunteer strategy (see Appendix A) and volunteer pathway (see Appendix B) for volunteering within Fife Gingerbread. To note, both the strategy and pathway were developed in 2018 and are currently being redeveloped by Fife Gingerbread in line with external factors. Fife Gingerbread already had a small number of volunteers involved in their projects and historic buddy relationships in place when the buddy network commenced (see baseline data in table 1). The overall aim of the buddy network is to develop a network of trained, approved volunteer buddies who support vulnerable families across Fife. There are four key outcome areas:

1. Increased social inclusion of disadvantaged families
2. Raising awareness of the issues that matter to families
3. Community-led capacity building
4. Volunteer skills and confidence

For volunteers, key milestones at the start of the project included:

1. At least 120 people will be recruited, trained and supported by Fife Gingerbread Volunteer Co-ordinators over the life of the project.
2. Maximise peer volunteering by encouraging at least 30 parents, who are, or have been Fife Gingerbread service users to become volunteers.
3. Create a clear and inclusive volunteer pathway for buddies to allow for gradual progression within peer volunteering and upskilling to become volunteer mentors.

The buddy network target is that 30 percent of volunteers have lived experience. A pathway model (see Appendix B) has been developed by Fife Gingerbread to support volunteer progression. The pathway begins with Fife Gingerbread service users who are encouraged to become volunteers with Fife Gingerbread (there are opportunities to be involved in various volunteering activities). Volunteers are then supported to take on a peer educator role before being provided with training and 1:1 support to become a buddy.

During year one of the buddy network, Volunteer Co-ordinators were developing the buddy mentor role and seeking feedback from buddies on what this role should look like. From here, the buddy network volunteer pathway is designed to give buddies the experience and skills to become Volunteer Co-ordinators themselves. From July 2019 to June 2020, the main buddy referrals were made by self-referral (27) followed by from within Fife Gingerbread (16). There were also a small number of referrals made to the buddy network by Fife Voluntary Action (3) and one referral each made by Jobcentre Plus, Volunteer Scotland, the Fife Forum and Fife Employment Access Trust.

Volunteers complete an application and recruitment process to become a buddy and are assigned a Volunteer Co-ordinator. Volunteer training is delivered by Fife Gingerbread and linked in with Fife Voluntary Action and the police who provide specific sessions on volunteer safety. The training typically involves four sessions but can also be provided flexibly (e.g. to smaller groups in the evening) to meet the needs of volunteers. The buddy training has been monitored and continuously developed by training feedback forms and feedback discussions.

The buddy network is supported by a Communities and Inclusion Development Co-ordinator and three part-time Volunteer Co-ordinators whose role it is to recruit new volunteers, lead training sessions with buddies, match buddies to families, and provide support to the buddy. Volunteers are asked to complete outcome stars at the beginning of volunteering and then at roughly quarterly intervals. Alongside this, individual action plans are also developed for each volunteer so a volunteer's progress can be monitored over time.

Buddies have regular support sessions with Volunteer Co-ordinators as well as taking part in staff/volunteer development days and local buddy network groups. Buddies are required to keep diaries after each visit where they record any issues that have arisen and share with co-ordinators by email. Volunteer Co-ordinators have also set up local area Facebook groups to keep in touch with volunteers.

In terms of activity, buddies usually meet the parent once a week for around two hours and this can include meeting at the parent's home, going for a coffee or a walk, and attending appointments with parents. The impacts of Covid-19 have meant that the support provided by buddies has had to be adapted and provided digitally or over the phone.

Aims of the evaluation

Due to impacts of restructuring within Fife Gingerbread in early 2019 on recruitment to the buddy network, year one of the evaluation conducted by the Poverty Alliance was focused on volunteer buddy experiences only. The data used in this report relates to the period from July 2019 to June 2020.

This phase of the evaluation aimed to look at the following areas:

- Motivations for volunteering
- Buddies' experiences of the volunteering process (including training, support)
- Outcomes for buddies and the families they support
- Learning on how to grow volunteering capacity withing Fife Gingerbread.

Phase one included three focus groups with ten buddies in total. We have also examined quantitative data collected during the project on the numbers of volunteers and families supported and outcome data collected via work outcome stars with 15 buddies during the first year of the project. Project data is collected via the Fife Gingerbread FORT management system and Fife Gingerbread collates monthly/quarterly snapshot data on parents/families supported by their projects as well as data relating to volunteer/buddy numbers. Focus groups were conducted at local buddy meet-up sessions. The number of buddies participating in the focus groups was initially affected by a pause in recruitment of volunteers during the restructuring of Fife Gingerbread as well as drop out on the day. We hope to capture more buddy experiences in the second phase of evaluation.

The focus group sessions focused on key topics including: volunteer motivations, training, understandings of the role, outcome for buddies, outcomes for the parents they support, volunteer support from Fife Gingerbread and challenges in the buddying relationship (see Appendix C for the focus group schedule).

Buddy network activity

Table 1 shows the baseline data on number of volunteers and families supported by volunteers prior to the buddy network commencing in June 2018.

Table 1: Baseline data

	No. families supported by volunteers	Total active volunteers*	Total inactive volunteers**	Expression of interest from new volunteers
Baseline data (collected in March and June 2018)	7	16	15	20

*active volunteers include volunteers who were actively involved in volunteer roles across Fife Gingerbread.

**inactive volunteers include volunteers not currently involved in volunteering activity.

Quarterly snapshot data provided by Fife Gingerbread between September 2019 and June 2020 shows how project activity has largely increased over this period (**Table 2**). In comparison to baseline data, table 2 shows how the number of active, trained volunteers 14 months into delivery of the buddy network tripled from 16 in June 2018 to 49 in September 2019. The numbers of families directly supported by a volunteer has also increased from baseline (seven families), reaching a peak of 34 families supported in January 2020, before decreasing to 18 in June 2020.

Table 2: Fife Gingerbread quarterly snapshot data (2019 – 2020)

	No. families supported by buddies	No. families awaiting a buddy	Total trained volunteers	Total number of buddies	Total number of buddies physically budding
September 2019	14	6	49	20	5
January 2020	34	15	59	34	17
April 2020	8	14	51	28	8
June 2020	18	12	49	30	16

Data is also recorded on the number of volunteers who were previously Fife Gingerbread service users. The buddy network target is that 30 percent of volunteers have lived experience. The most recent snapshot data (June 2020) shows that this target is largely being met across the six areas the buddy network is delivered in. In Glenrothes, 63% of volunteers have lived experience, in Leven - 55%, in Cowdenbeath and Lochgelly - 42% and in Kirkcaldy - 33%. There are no volunteers with lived experience currently in Dunfermline and South West Fife, but the total number of active volunteers is very small in these areas.

Motivations for buddying

The volunteer buddies had a range of motivations for volunteering. Several had either been supported by or volunteered in another capacity with Fife Gingerbread and had decided to buddy. For several of the volunteers, buddying was an opportunity to gain experience of

working in the third sector in a social care role and they hoped that it would open opportunities for future employment. For all the volunteers, a desire to do something rewarding and to bring to the role their own experiences of being a parent, and sometimes personal experiences of anxiety, was a key driver.

“Fife Gingerbread is a good opportunity because I see personal development. I see more social, communication, social contact. And also, I like to help people. I like to feel useful myself.” (FG1, P3)

“I think it was just because I just felt that that was something that I’d be good at. I’m a very people-person and with not working as well it’s the first time in a long time I’ve not worked so I was actually, ‘cause I was starting to feel better, was a bit bored as well, I thought and I need to actually, I need to do something for me but also something that, I’ll get something out of.” (FG2, P1)

Goals of buddying relationship

Volunteers felt that the aims of the buddying relationship were varied and depended on the individual parent but there was consensus that improving parents’ confidence and reducing social isolation through developing a non-judgemental relationship based on trust were key. Volunteers described the relationship as a journey beginning with “baby steps” to support a parent to try new things to over time parents feeling confident and independent to do things by themselves. One volunteer highlighted the varying goals as well as activities that a buddying relationship can include:

“So you get matched with a single parent or a family, so supporting them through any difficulties they may be having so whether it’s confidence or being able to organise themselves. So it could just be going to the doctor for an appointment. Being that safety net for them to sit in the waiting room if they’re nervous. Or going to the local shop, getting on the bus, that kind of thing.” (FG1, P1)

Other aims of the buddying relationship included providing emotional support, empowering parents, supporting parents with mental health issues, and providing support with parenting or life skills. In one group, volunteers discussed the difficulties of giving advice to parents, as they might not have the right expertise or experience. In this situation, this group said it was important to feedback any issues to Fife Gingerbread. The importance of being non-judgemental was also mentioned frequently. In one focus group, volunteers discussed how they had learned to “sit back” and to not express opinions (particularly around parenting issues) but felt confident to raise something if it was a concern (e.g. a safety issue). Providing a non-judgemental, independent relationship was viewed as a key aim of the buddy project.

“Every week, day in, day out, there’s something that they feel like they’re just getting punched constantly”

“There’s no’ light at the end of the tunnel (yeah) they cannae see it. It’s like getting darker and darker not lighter and lighter”

“So, when you have a one constant, you know, it makes such a difference.” (FG3)

Becoming a buddy: training and support from Fife Gingerbread

Across the focus groups, the support provided by Fife Gingerbread was frequently raised. Volunteers said they very quickly felt part of the wider Fife Gingerbread network. One volunteer said:

“I felt it [the training] was good that you really felt like you were part of an organisation, a team, you know, they really care about their volunteers. And even like what you were just saying about, earlier about phoning to say that you’re okay after a meeting, you know, that’s just showing that they really care.” (FG1, P2)

The approachable, supportive, and encouraging support of the Fife Gingerbread Co-ordinators was frequently highlighted. One volunteer described the value of the support provided for them:

“And you’ve got a good relationship with them because aye, there has been a few times that I’ve had to get back in contact with [Volunteer Co-ordinator] about my mum and, you know, we’ve all worked together and it’s been great. Because life happens to us as well, do you know what I mean? And you need to know that if something’s going wrong you can still pick up the phone and say to the “Look, I can’t be a volunteer this week”.” (FG3)

There were a range of positives that buddies reported about the buddy programme including the flexibility of the role – although most met supported parents at the same time each week each appreciated the ability to fit this in around other family/work commitments. The caring ethos of Fife Gingerbread was important also as well as opportunities to be involved in volunteer meet-up groups or Fife Gingerbread activities.

Training

Volunteers usually receive four sessions of training each three hours long. Additional training is also available to volunteers delivered by other organisations in Fife. Volunteers’ perceptions of the training were largely very positive. Volunteers found that diversity of topics covered in the training very useful. For example, one volunteer mentioned how a session on poverty in Fife had helped them to better understand the nature of the lives of the parents supported by Fife Gingerbread:

“For me, some of the most useful stuff was learning about some of the poverty stats in Fife as well. And then realising just how bad some people in Fife have it. And being made aware that some of the people that you’d be going to see, would just be poverty issues, there may be substance issues, some of the people I’ve seen have had abuse issues as well, so the

training's a good eye opener, explaining what we may expect. Not just poverty, but other issues as well. Or other issues can also be associated with poverty.” (FG1, P1)

Volunteers felt that hearing the experiences of current volunteer buddies was one of the most useful parts of the training. They felt that this could be built into the training even more by inviting existing volunteers to come and talk to new buddies and do a Q & A session. Whilst a volunteer described the training as intense, she reflected that it needed to be as volunteers need to be aware of issues around child protection and risk. The training was viewed as providing volunteers with the knowledge of how to deal with difficult situations. It also gave volunteers a broader knowledge about Fife Gingerbread and the pathways for parents and volunteers to develop through volunteering.

Other training opportunities were taken up by all of the volunteers who frequently mentioned the NHS Fife courses they could undertake via Fife Gingerbread, although some commented that they had been on a waiting list for a long time to have a place. For example, in one focus group, the participants shared that they would like more training on mental health awareness.

“But when it comes to the actual Fife Gingerbread training, I think it just, it makes sure that everybody's on the same page. So we know the rules as well... Like you've got to protect yourself, you've got to protect them, you make sure that you don't do anything that's not correct, do you know what I mean? And so that's what I would say, for me the most beneficial thing about the training was meeting other people, discussing things.” (FG2, P2)

Experiences of buddying

Of the 10 buddies spoken to, two were waiting to be matched with a parent. With the other eight, experiences of buddying over time (including the matching process, the development of the relationship and any issues that had arisen) were explored.

- Whilst often feeling nervous about meeting a parent for the first time, buddies described how they felt comfortable and supported during the process and confident that they could tell their Volunteer Co-ordinator if something did not feel right.
- Buddies described how the first meeting was important to find out about each other and understand each other's expectations of the relationship, supported by the Volunteer Co-ordinator.
- Buddies usually meet a supported parent for around an hour every week, but this can be flexible depending on whether they are meeting inside or outside.
- Buddies mostly mentioned going to a supported parent's home for a tea and chat. For parents experiencing anxiety, trying to go outside for a walk around the block was often a goal. Buddies also mentioned attending appointments with parents or supporting them to attend a new group for example.

- Buddies found keeping their buddy diary helpful and an important way to record any significant issues that may arise during a visit. There was some variation in how often diaries were expected to be submitted to co-ordinators.
- Volunteers liked having clear rules in place for seeing their supported parent and communicating with their co-ordinator after each meeting.

“Well [Volunteer Co-ordinator] goes into as much detail as she can, and she’ll tell you about them. Tell you about their situation. Also give you a wee synopsis of who they are and how they tick. And basically, you’ve got enough information from there, when you initially meet your buddy, [Volunteer Co-ordinator’s] with you at that time as well. So, the three of us sort of together and you get to have that connection. And you get to have that connection with your buddy as well.” (FG2)

Impacts of buddying

Outcomes for parents

Volunteers highlighted three key outcomes for parents including: 1. Increases in confidence and independence, 2. Reduced loneliness/isolation and 3. Decreased anxiety.

1. **Improved confidence:** All the volunteers described how they could see that the buddy relationship had improved parents’ confidence. Volunteer buddies gave examples of how the relationship had led parents they were buddying to feel more motivated, from a starting point of sometimes not wanting to go out to waiting at the door, ready for their buddy. With the support provided through the buddy relationship, parents had joined local groups (e.g. a baby massage class) and after attending with their buddy had felt confident to go alone.

“So, it’s obviously like, you know, it motivates them it’s like, “Today, I’ve got that appointment...”

“Yeah. But it does motivate—that’s the thing it’s the motivation point.”

“Yeah. So they’re up and showered and ready for you, you know?”

“Mine’s normally waiting at the door for me.” (FG3)

“So, I managed to encourage her to go to that [support group]. Although she never said a lot, she came out feeling like she was just like on top of the world, it was like, “Great!” ‘Cause—and she was so pleased wi’ herself that she’d gone... So, yeah, that was great for her. So, we’ve been to a few of them since, and she’s starting to talk a wee bit more (that’s good) no’ loads. But, like, for her huge, you know? So, yeah, that’s a great thing. Like I say and she’s getting a wee bit more friendlier wi’ some of these mums, ‘cause she kinda does keep hersel’ to hersel’. But she has been kinda branching out a wee bit there.” (FG3, P3)

2. **Reduced loneliness and isolation:** many of the parents were described as very isolated. The impacts of 'just having somebody to talk to' was described as important for lone parents. Through attending groups and going out more, volunteers felt that parents had met more people.

"I just think, me personally, I mean, I've got three kids and although I'm married, you can feel lonely as a mum, and that's me wi' a—having a partner and, so I just, and I seen a lot of the place, where I worked, I mean there was a lot of poverty down there and a lot of single mums that were coming in and out and I just felt really sorry for them that some of them just had nobody to talk to, nobody to turn to. Even just like parents or anybody for a bit of advice or anything." (FG3, P1)

3. **Reduced anxiety:** several of the volunteers felt that for parents experiencing anxiety the buddy relationship gave them the space to speak to someone confidentially. Several said that having previously experienced anxiety themselves, they felt able to relate to parents and therefore parents would open up to them.

"So when I spoke with him on our first meeting, he's like, "I can't believe I'm talking to somebody else that can actually relate," because he said, "sometimes I feel like it's just me that feels like this and there's actually other people out there that actually feels, has been in the position that I'm in just now. But you're here. You've got past that." (FG2)

Outcomes for buddies

Volunteer buddies' complete outcome stars before becoming a buddy and at roughly three-monthly intervals. Outcome stars are evidence-based tools designed to support positive change and greater wellbeing and used to measure a 'journey of change' in outcomes over time. In focus groups, the buddies felt that this was a useful way to keep track of the skills they have developed. Buddies can either be supported to complete the star with their coordinator or can complete it by themselves.

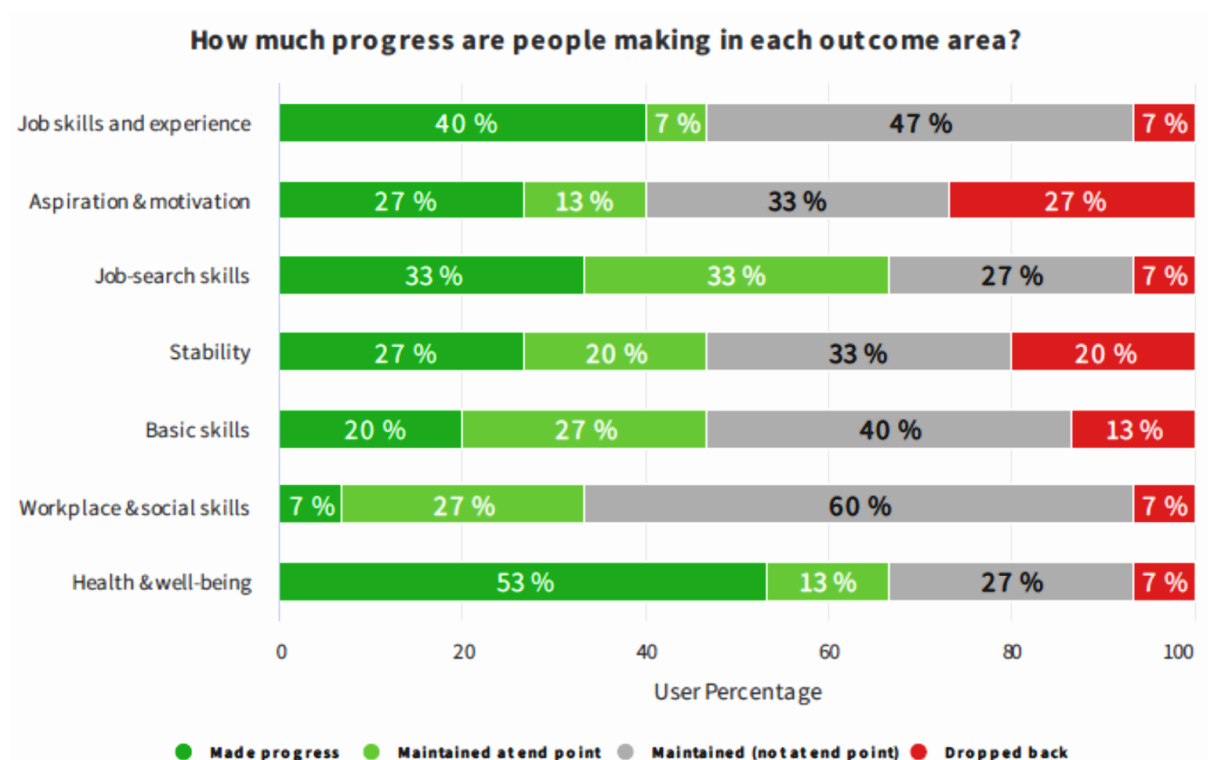
Fife Gingerbread originally used the work outcome star with buddies but moved to using the employability focused pathway star for some volunteers as it was viewed to be more applicable. The work star measures outcomes on seven areas linked to employability/employment on a 1-10 scale: job skills and experience, aspiration and motivation, job-search skills, stability, basic skills, workplace and social skills and health and well-being. Its limitation as a tool is that it does not take account of external factors that might affect an increase or decrease in an outcome area (e.g. family circumstances etc.).

Fife Gingerbread provided work outcome star data for 15 buddies, 13 who first engaged with the project in its first year (between June 2018 and June 2019) and 2 who were volunteers prior to the buddy network being set up. For the fifteen buddies, work outcome star readings for the 7 outcome areas are provided at two time points for comparison: at their first

engagement (baseline) with the project and for their most recent completion of the work star (comparison). The number of weeks between completion of the first and most recent work outcome star ranged between 2 and 17 for the 15 buddies, with an average of three months between each star being completed.

A comparison between the buddies' baseline and comparison stars shows the greatest increase in progress for buddies was in health and well-being (53% of the 15 buddies had improved star readings) (see chart 1). Changes in other outcome areas recorded by the work star were more mixed, split between buddies having made progress or staying at the same level. Although based on a very small sample, the data also shows that 4 of the 15 buddies' star readings had decreased (dropped back) in the outcome area of aspiration and motivation.

Chart 1: Work outcome star buddy progress over time



In the focus groups, volunteer buddies were asked to share what they thought the outcomes had been for them. Volunteers shared that volunteering as a buddy had led to several personal outcomes for them including increased confidence and personal development. For all the volunteers, meeting other volunteers through Fife Gingerbread and opportunities to be involved in other activities were a key part of their experience.

- 1. Increased confidence:** Most of the volunteer buddies shared how they had come into volunteering as a buddy after experiences of struggling as a parent or suffering with anxiety themselves. Volunteers shared how being a buddy had increased their confidence.

One group discussed how completing outcome stars with their Volunteer Co-ordinator had made them realise the positive impacts on their self-confidence.

“For me, I’ve got quite bad anxiety, so that was a barrier at the beginning. Feeling confident enough to even attend the training in a group kind of scenario. But all the volunteering I’ve been doing is, like everyone’s been so great and I’ve noticed a big difference in myself in the six months, you know?” (FG1, P2)

“The first one [outcome star] I did, mine was like ones and twos. Like really, really... But then I did feel like that, but the last time I did it, it was like sevens and eights and I’m like, “Oh, I’m actually getting there”.” (FG3, P3)

“I did feel like a single parent sometimes and I did feel like I had nobody. So, to reach out and start and help and share my experiences as a mum, like it just gave me so much confidence. I felt like I was becoming me again instead of just “mum” you know?” (FG3, P1)

- 2. Increased social connections:** all the volunteers had made connections with other volunteers via the buddy Facebook page and WhatsApp groups. Volunteer meetings were viewed as a good opportunity to hear about other volunteers’ experiences and to get to know other volunteers. A couple had also encouraged friends, who were struggling, to volunteer.

“I think especially with the three of us having kinda... finding life a wee bit difficult at times, I think it was good for us all to have that and to have people that you’ve met and that you can keep in contact with. You kinda just set up your own little support network.” (FG2)

“My next door neighbour suffers from quite bad anxiety and she’s not worked for a while. And I was saying to her, “Why don’t you look about volunteering?” I said, “I’m volunteering with Gingerbread.” I said, “And it’s helped me massively, like wi’ just my confidence, my self-worth.” D’you know? I says, “Getting myself out there, I’ve built kinda friendships,” d’you know. And she’s quite isolated, she doesn’t have a lotta friends either.” (FG2)

- 3. Personal development:** The volunteers felt that personal development had been a key outcome for them including learning new skills and opening employment opportunities. Several described that their experience had led to them looking for employment in the third sector in a similar role.

“I think it’s really good for building your skills as well. Especially if you are looking to go into employment, you know, it’s, you’re gaining new skills, it maybe gives you different view of what you’d like to do for the future, for example, you know, it might make you think, ‘Well actually I would like to work with families so...’ D’you know what, it might make you think, ‘Ah, well, actually no, I don’t wanna do that.’ So it gives you a realistic view of what you can maybe do in the future.” (FG2)

Challenges

Overall, due to the support provided by Fife Gingerbread, volunteers did not feel concerned about any issues that could arise as a buddy. The main challenge was sometimes struggling to manage meetings when they had things going on in their own lives. A couple of volunteers had experience of being matched with a parent which then did not work out but felt supported through this. One of the greatest challenges was not knowing how parents might be feeling after an initial meeting but buddies described feeling supported to manage this by their co-ordinator. Another challenge for a couple of buddies had been the late cancellation of meetings by parents. Two of the Volunteer Co-ordinators reflected on the challenge of buddy appointments being cancelled at short notice. They worked with parents to keep options open and provide a flexible approach to make sure the timing of meetings worked for parents, whilst also ensuring they were aware they should call into the office if they had to cancel.

Looking ahead

The phase one research on volunteer buddies' experiences has highlighted buddies' routes into volunteering, their experiences of training and the matching process, and their perceptions on the outcomes of buddying for both themselves and the parents they support. It has also examined this in the context of organisational restructuring within Fife Gingerbread in early 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the ongoing expansion of the buddy network with Fife Gingerbread support to families since March 2020 focussed on a blended model of support for families going forwards, with support provided by buddies taking place digitally. Phase two of this research will focus specifically on the impact of Covid-19 on the development of the buddy model examining the experiences of Volunteer Co-ordinators, buddies and the parents they support and focusing on building learning for the continued delivery of the network.

Appendix A: Fife Gingerbread Volunteering Strategy



Appendix B: Fife Gingerbread Volunteer Pathway



Appendix C: Focus group schedule

Topics	Questions	Probes
Introduction	Participants share how long they have been volunteering with Fife Gingerbread and how they became involved in the buddy project	
Volunteer motivations	<p>Can you share the reasons why you volunteered as a buddy?</p> <p>Share a couple of key motivations which lay behind your decision to volunteer</p> <p>Were there any barriers to you becoming a volunteer with FG?</p>	Transport, training, childcare
Induction/training	<p>Can you tell me a bit about what your initial meeting with your volunteer co-ordinator involved?</p> <p>What did the training involve? What were your expectations?</p>	<p>How was the buddy role explained to you?</p> <p>Aspects of training found most helpful Anything that would have been useful Opportunities for ongoing training and training from other organisations</p>
Understanding of buddy role	How would you describe your role as a buddy volunteer to someone who did not know about the project?	Short- and long-term goals of buddy relationship
Outcomes for buddy – personal development	<p>Can you share what differences volunteering has made for you?</p> <p>Can you tell me a bit about what other things your role as a buddy has led onto? (training, education, involvement in other local projects?)</p>	<p>Personal: confidence, wellbeing, skills Social: new friendships, great involvement in community</p>

Outcomes for parents and families	What do you feel are the benefits of the buddy relationship for parents?	
Volunteer support and perception of role within FG	<p>How are you supported by your volunteer co-ordinator?</p> <p>What kinds of issues do you discuss with the volunteer co-ordinator?</p> <p>What would you like the volunteer group meetings to involve?</p> <p>Do you feel that in role you are involved as part of the FG team?</p> <p>Is there anything you feel that could be done differently in terms of volunteer support?</p>	<p>How often do you meet with co-ordinators? Is there any additional support that would help you?</p> <p>How do you feel that things about FG are communicated to you?</p>
Challenges in the buddy relationship	Can you share any experiences of challenges you have experienced in the buddy relationship?	Any challenges around initially developing relationship, any practical challenges around time/commitment
Summing up	What would you tell other people thinking about volunteering as a buddy?	