



GIG BUDDIES

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



Thanks for choosing to become a Gig Buddy with Thera Trust!

This pack contains everything you need to know about being a Gig Buddies Volunteer. Whether you need to know how to get free personal assistant tickets for a show, who our venue partners are, how to claim expenses, or advice on keeping your buddy safe, you can find it here!

As a Gig Buddies Volunteer, you are a vital part of the project. We hope your time as a Gig Buddy is enjoyable and fun, and that you build a great relationship with your buddy.

Thanks again for choosing to enable people to live the life they choose, whether that's to get up early or to stay up late!

Samuel Maggs
Gig Buddies Project Manager

Note: Some elements in this handbook are interactive and link through to more information!

'How fucking great is Gig Buddies Thera?!'
- Tim Minchin

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What is Gig Buddies?

Gig Buddies is a project that enables people with a learning disability/autistic people to get out to more events they love. We do this by pairing members to like minded volunteers who share the same interests. This could be music, theatre, cinema, sport. It's whatever your 'gig' is!



Gig Buddies is all about having more people in your life who aren't paid to be there. Once you've got a Gig Buddy, you'll get out with them roughly once a month to enjoy your shared passion together. We encourage our buddies to develop their relationship in whatever way they feel comfortable with.



We also love getting out as a group and discovering new things. This could be anything from an unknown band in a grassroots indie venue, to a national orchestra at the worlds biggest arts festival. Whatever it is, we love it live! We run lot's of group socials every month in each area we work in. We try our best to make these a wide variety of events so that we're always introducing our members to new experiences. We have lots of partner venues and organisations that enable us to offer great opportunities to our members and pairings. You can read more about a few of them later in this guide.

'Gig buddies is the best thing that has ever happened in Scotland!'
- Don, Gig Buddies Edinburgh





Where Do We Work?

This is a guide to Gig Buddies projects run by the Thera Trust. We currently work in Edinburgh, West Lothian, and Glasgow. If you're not in one of these areas, there might be a Gig Buddies project local to you run through another organisation. Go to www.gigbuddies.org.uk for the full list of Gig Buddies projects.



Our Arts Partners

We love offering our members new and exciting experiences. We work with a wide range of venues and arts organisations to be able to get our members and volunteers out to some of the biggest and best events in the country. Here's a list of some our current partners.



A GIG BUDDIES HISTORY LESSON



Gig Buddies was started in 2013 by Brighton based charity 'Stay Up Late'. The charity itself was founded by punk band Heavy Load. Gig Buddies has since been franchised out to other organisations all over the UK and even in Sydney, Australia. Here in Scotland, we are run by Thera Trust.

Click on the Heavy Load and Stay Up Late images for more info.



BEING A GIG BUDDY

Simply put, being a Gig Buddy means being a friend. You're there to enable someone to enjoy an interest that you both share, but you might also be someone they can comfortably chat with if they need to.

Volunteering with Gig Buddies should be relaxed, casual, and feel natural. We want our buddies to be comfortable with each other and encourage them to coordinate their relationship in whatever way suits them. This could be anything from texting, email, talking over the phone, meeting for coffee to arrange events, or even sorting everything out through family or a member of support.

You are not a support worker. This is very important to us in clearly defining your role. You have the right to say 'no' to something you don't want to do or don't feel comfortable with. It's important that people (including your buddy, their support, and Gig Buddies) know your personal boundaries.

[Click here to read more about what your role is and isn't.](#)

[Click here to read more of our 'Code of Conduct' information.](#)

What We Expect from you

Being part of Gig Buddies is relaxed and casual, but there are still a few things we expect from our volunteers.

Get out with your buddy regularly.

We ask for you to see your buddy once a month. If you want to meet up more than that, go ahead! If you want to meet up less, make that known and let us know the reasons why. Gig Buddies is about building a regular relationship and we want both parties to be comfortable.

Let your buddy know if plans are going to change.

This seems obvious, but trust us, it's happened in the past. If you aren't going to be able to make it to a planned outing with your buddy, let them know as soon as possible. Not turning up to meet your buddy could do serious harm to your relationship and to their view on what a friendship is. We want Gig Buddies to be cool. This isn't cool.

Come to socials.

A large part of your role is encouraging your buddy to expand their social networks. We run many regular events that everyone is welcome to attend. We ask for you to bring your buddy to at least 4 of these events across the year. That way, they can meet more people, make more friends, and when you need to stop volunteering with us, they may have such a strong social network that they no longer need a buddy.

Let us know what you're getting up to.

We love hearing what our buddies are getting up to. When you're out with your buddy, take a selfie and share it with us on social media. This also helps spread the word!

GETTING TO EVENTS.

We want you and your buddy to go to whatever events you choose. As long as you can get there, you can go! Here are a few tips for when it comes to booking tickets and getting out and about with your buddy.

Find out how to easily travel around.

Travelling around is a topic that we will cover when you first meet your buddy. It's likely that your buddy will have a 'National Entitlement Card'. This entitles them to free bus travel across the whole of Scotland, and very often comes with a 'plus one'. Make use of this! Being able to travel for free on almost every bus means you can get further afield easily.



How far can you travel for FREE!

Getting free tickets.

Although you can claim £120 per year on exenses, always keep an eye out for cheaper tickets. Many venues including theatres, cinemas, historic sites, and increasingly more and more music venues, will offer free or discounted tickets to people in a supporting role. Annoyingly this isn't always advertised on their website, so it's best to call the box office directly to find out more information.

Just ask 'I'm looking to supporting someone with a disability to this event and would like to know if you offer personal assistant tickets'. They should understand what you mean by this and let you know the venues accessibility information. Free tickets come under many names including 'Personal Assistant (or PA) Tickets', 'Free Tickets For Carers', and 'Supporter Tickets'. They should all mean the same thing. Sometimes you will get a free ticket, sometimes venues will give you both tickets at a discounted price. If a venue doesn't offer free or discounted tickets, please let us know and we will be in touch with them as to why they should.

Access focused
Venue Reviews

→ EUAN'S **GUIDE**

CLAIM YOUR EXPENSES

Claiming expenses with Gig Buddies is simple. We use an easy to complete Excel document that you can get from your local coordinator. If you don't have a copy, just ask. You can expect your expense claim to appear in your bank account roughly 2 weeks after it gets approved.

All of our volunteers can claim expenses from times they've been out with their buddy. You're entitled to £120 across 12 months. This is your own budget to control. Feel free to claim back the cost of event tickets, public transport, food, etc. However **YOU MUST KEEP YOUR RECEIPTS**. Without receipts, we can't approve your expense claim.

“But Gig Buddies is a charity and I don't want to take their money”

Claiming your expenses doesn't take money away from anywhere else in the project. When we apply for funding we make part of the budget available specifically for volunteer

expenses. If we don't spend this money, we might not be awarded the same amount next time. So, please feel free to make a claim for any money you'd like back.

KEEPING YOUR BUDDY SAFE

Knowing what to do and who to contact in any given situation is vital to keeping your buddy safe. You will have their emergency contact details, this might be their mum, dad, other family member, or even a member of their support team. You will also have the number of your local Gig Buddies Coordinator. Here's some information if calling the contacts you have isn't suitable.

WORRIED FOR YOUR BUDDIES SAFETY?

[Find your local contact](#)

Every local authority area has a dedicated safeguarding officer. This person can help you with any 'Adult Support and Protection' issue you may have. Do not hesitate to call them and ask for advice.

SAFEGUARDING LAW.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Want to know more about the law and your duties when it comes to keeping people safe? This .Gov site has everything you need to know.

CALL THE POLICE.

If you ever feel that your buddy is in immediate danger, call the police.

Steps Towards Volunteering

There are a few stages to your application before we can pair you with a buddy. These include background checks, references and training. If you have any questions, please contact your local coordinator.

1 Application

This simple form is the start of your journey towards being a volunteer and is where you tell us why you'd like to be a Gig Buddy and what kind of things you like getting out to. You may have already completed this, but if you haven't click the link below to download it.

[Download Form](#)

2 Informal Interview

We'll meet up, usually in a cafe, and have a chat about you and Gig Buddies. We'll go over a few aspects of the role, and what the next steps are.

3 Checks

This is where we have to wait a while for things to come back to us. We need to collect a reference from you, see some proof that you have the right to volunteer in the UK, and we will send off for a PVG (this is free).

4 Training

There is a package of training that you have to complete before you can get out 1:1 with your Gig Buddy. Some of this is self led e-learning which is accessed through Thera's Learning Management System (LMS). Once all your checks have come back, you will be told how to access this. The training includes:



Face to Face induction - This is taught session covering a range of topics from what your role is, to safeguarding vulnerable adults. This lasts 3.5 hours and is done in-person or over Zoom.

Note: Once your induction session is complete, you can meet your buddy! However, you will still have to complete the package of e-learning.



E-Learning - The rest of your training will be online through the LMS. In total this takes about 4 hours, but you can do it at your own pace. This includes:

- [Oliver McGowan Learning Disability/Autism Training](#)

- First aid Lite

- Fire Safety Lite

- Moving and Handling Lite

- Infection Control Lite

- Handling Information Securely

- Lone Working

Note: The above modules are mandatory for all volunteers but the LMS is full of other topics and sessions that you're welcome to complete should you wish.

5 Meeting Your Buddy

Once you've had your face to face induction and your e-learning is underway, we will introduce you to your buddy!

We'll send you an email or speak on the phone first about who we're thinking of pairing you with and go over their support needs so that we can address any questions or worries you may have.

We will then arrange a meeting between, us, you, your buddy, and their family/support. This is where we will talk about why we've paired you together and you can introduce yourselves to each other. We'll also go over a short risk assessment containing a few things that we'd like buddies to think about when they're getting out with each other.

6 Get Out To Gigs!

The 2 of you are now Gig Buddies and you can get out to whatever you want, whenever you want! Remember that there are lots of group socials all over town that you can get involved with to meet more people and discover new events. And don't forget to take advantage of any deals and free tickets from our partner venues. Whenever you're thinking of booking tickets to something, it's worth running it past your local coordinator to see if we're friends with the venue or event organiser.



'Why don't you leave your name and your number, and I'll get back to you.'

Check us out on social media, or get in touch with your local Gig Buddies contact. We'd love to hear from you!



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