

Buddy Scheme Overview

What is the buddy scheme?

Many of you may be finding settling into university daunting and overwhelming. Knowing where you can meet new people, settling into a new city, and moving away from home can be a big adjustment, and can be isolating. The most important thing to remember is that you are not alone and is why we run the Buddy Scheme.

If you are someone who has joined university and perhaps hasn't formed friendships within your accommodation or with others on your course, or if you're looking to expand your social circle further by getting involved with a diversity of activities with like-minded peers, the SU Buddy Scheme is for you!

The Buddy Scheme is designed to be very informal – it's just a chance to meet someone new, boost your wellbeing and combat loneliness through the support offered by a student just like you. Our goal is to reduce the social isolation that is frequently experienced at university and create a safe space for people to get together.

We have developed two different options for students to meet new people at university:

- One to one pairing with a student volunteer
- Access to a teams chat with other students looking to make friends, and priority access to events in the city, funded by the SU. These include trips to Mount Edgecumbe, Dartmoor Zoo, the Aquarium and more. You will not be paired up with anyone directly but attend events with other students who are also struggling to meet new people and settle into university life.

We have a limited number of volunteers available to support, so there may be a waiting list to access this service. We will pair up students who most need a 1 to 1 buddy first and refer other students to our second service on the buddy scheme.

You will need to download the Teams app on your phone or laptop to access the Buddy Scheme chat. We will add all students who sign up for the buddy scheme to this chat, unless you opt out on the original sign up form. You can download this for Apple or Android devices here:

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-teams/download-app>

How does the matching process work?

We will look over your initial applications and pair you up based on you school, faculty and interests. The more information you gave, the easier it will be for us to match you with the right person! We will then email the buddy volunteer and the student with each person's name, email and a bit about them. The buddies will then be in contact to meet with you and introduce themselves.

Connecting with your buddy

The main aim is that you both feel comfortable in these meetings. Start out somewhere you are happy with, like the library or a campus café. You can also meet virtually if you and your buddy prefer. It's important to let someone know where you're going for the first meeting, and make sure you have a safe route home planned - get a taxi if needed.

Only give out your number if/when you are ready. Email should be your main point of contact unless you both decide otherwise. We also advise against giving out your social media profiles to buddies.

If you are struggling to get hold of your student or volunteer, please get in touch with us. If you no longer need to be involved in the scheme, please send us an email so we can reallocate your volunteer!

We have a list of events running throughout the year all listed on the UPSU Buddy Scheme page: <https://www.upsu.com/volunteer/buddyscheme/>. We will also share events in Plymouth on the Teams chat, and many other events taking place! Below is a link to the UPSU activity page. This has a host of activities and volunteering opportunities which could be a great way to get to know your buddy. For example, once a month we have student volunteers going up to Dartmoor Zoo to help out. You could also keep an eye out for any events on campus through this calendar - <https://www.upsu.com/ents/>

Confidentiality

Your buddy will treat any information you tell them as confidential, unless they need to escalate any situation. This should be done with your permission, but please read the UPSU confidentiality policy prior to meeting your buddy. They will abide by the rules of this policy in your meetings, so it's best for you to be aware also - <https://www.upsu.com/advice/confidentiality/>

Buddy Boundaries

Your volunteer buddy is there to be a friend and support. However, they are not replacing any of our UPSU/University support services. They have their own personal boundaries and will signpost you to relevant services to support you. They are not trained counsellors so please respect the boundaries they set out from the start. They will inform you of the best ways to contact them, how many hours they are available, and how many meetings they can do.

If you feel like you are struggling with your current buddy, please come and see Holly Randall (buddyscheme@su.plymouth.ac.uk) or Louise Mealand (Louise.Mealand@su.Plymouth.ac.uk) in the Hive, and we can support you.

If you need more support than your buddy can provide, please explore the resources provided by UPSU/University.

Student Resources

Togetherall – <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/counselling/togetherall>

Student Wellbeing Services - <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/counselling>

University Medical Centre - <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/medical-centre-wellbeing-centre>

Disability Services - <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/disability-and-dyslexia>

Student Services (HUB) - <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/studentservices@plymouth.ac.uk>

[+44\(0\)1752 587676](tel:+4401752587676)

International advice - <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/international-students/international-student-advice/immigration-and-visas>

If you are having a mental health crisis you can also contact your GP or you can also contact First Response: **08009239323**.


To book a support session please visit the Student Services website and complete an on-line referral - <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/making-an-appointment>

SHINE online resources <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/shine>

Speak Up Tool - <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/speak-up>

Speak Up – report abuse, harm or hate

Find out more about the steps you can take to bring serious incidents of misconduct that have taken place in the University community to our attention



The University of Plymouth is proud to be a **safe, welcoming and diverse** community – our staff, students and anyone interacting with us should feel comfortable being who they are.

We believe that bullying, harassment and discrimination are never okay. Any allegations of this nature (which includes sexual violence, abuse or hate) are taken incredibly seriously.

By reporting an incident, you are helping us to maintain our friendly and safe university culture, where everyone can study, work and live free from any form of harassment.

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