



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS

What having a befriender for your child can mean for you & your child

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If you are a parent/carer then it is likely you have to juggle with many demands on your time and energy. You may have practical concerns about housing and finances or one of your children may be going through a troubled patch. No matter how competent you are, it can be very difficult bringing up a family. The scheme we offer may be able to help.

What do we offer you?

'Fun In Action for Children' ("FIA") is a registered charity set up in September 1999 as a voluntary befriending scheme for children growing up in the city of Brighton and Hove.

We set up fun friendships between children and adults from outside the family. We refer to the adults who volunteer for us as 'befrienders'. If you had a befriender for your child, he or she would call regularly once a week or fortnight and take your child for an outing usually for at least 3 hours. Outings are agreed between the befriender and the child, and can be anything that both agree is enjoyable. It isn't about providing the child with lots of treats or presents but developing a close friendship. The idea is that the child gets another adult in their lives who they can talk to and who show over time that they care about them, have fun with them and can be trusted to support them through any difficulties. You as a parent also get a regular break and a chance to recharge your batteries.

Befrienders are not paid, they volunteer because they want to offer some direct help where it is needed. Because we believe that having a close friendship can make a difference to how children feel about themselves, and because it takes time for people to become good friends, we ask befrienders to make a 2 - year commitment to the child they befriend. Befrienders understand the need for something long-term and are willing to make that commitment. No financial support is required or expected from the family for this.

Parents/Carers as partners

We are a voluntary, not a statutory organisation. This means you always have a choice about whether to join us and use the services we offer. **It also means that you are key partners in any decisions that are made.** If you decide to ask us to find a befriender for your child the decision as to who it would be would be a decision we would make together. If you were not happy with the person we recommend we would listen to you and look again together at who else might be suitable.

Once your child has a befriender and throughout the time you are involved with the organisation we will ask what you think about things and will take very seriously your suggestions or any concerns you have. Safeguarding is a top priority for the charity and we particularly ask you to report any concerns in this area directly and immediately to the Child & Family Support Worker or the Befriender & Training Manager at the FIA offices. Telephone number 01273 559794/01273 556604.

Who runs Fun in Action for Children

Staff who are responsible for the day to day running of the charity:

- **Russell Lerner – Project Leader**
- **Rachel Goldsmith - Child & Family Support Worker**
- **Lisa Tarrant – Befriender & Training Manager**

Our work is overseen by a **Management Committee who act as Trustees** and have responsibility for the running of the organisation and its finances. The Committee meets at least 4 times a year. All committee members are volunteers and so do not work on a day to day basis at the charity offices. However, the Chair of the Committee, Ralph Crane, is contactable through the charity.

The befrienders

Our befrienders represent our diverse community and bring with them a wide range of valuable skills and life experiences to help families who are under resourced and under pressure. They must be 21 years or older to be accepted. We look for people who are, honest, reliable and trustworthy and who can understand how a child feels. They must also be open and adaptable - people who can work with us and with you. Some people have children of their own - often these have grown up and left home - others are younger people who like children and feel they have some time to spare.

Befrienders are carefully selected through interview and have been fully trained before being matched with a child/young person. All befrienders have 2 personal and one professional reference in place and will also be police checked by the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service). To help us make safer recruitment decisions of befrienders we also interview, and police check any partners or flatmates. Befrienders will have a 3-month probation monitoring to ensure the match is working for you, the child and befriender.

The Child and the Befriender

After you and your child have met the befriender for the first time, we will ask you to complete a Parent/Carer consent form and return to us. Once received by Fun in Action, we will pass onto the befriender, who will then contact you directly to arrange the first outing with your child. This form will enable us and the befriender to have the relevant information to help regarding any medical or special needs to ensure smooth outings.

What do the befriender and child do together?

They might go to the park, swimming, play football, and visit places of interest, bike ride, cook, garden or shop – whatever is agreed by them both to be an enjoyable use of their time. After a probationary period of 3 months, and with the agreement from the befriender and your permission as parent/carer and child, the befriender is able to take the children for visits to their home. We allow this as part of the befriending because in this way the child will come to view the befriender not as a source of treats, but as a person with whom they can make a relationship. Home visits also mean that the befriender and the child have an opportunity to do activities together, like cooking, reading, gardening, painting and crafts which would not be possible otherwise. If you have any concerns about this or do not wish your child to visit the befriender's home, please discuss this with your Child & Family Support Worker.

Parent/Carer Responsibilities

- To respect and safeguard the dignity, worth, and rights of all children, their families and befrienders as individuals, regardless of race, colour, religion, gender, disability, age or sexual orientation.
- To abide by our Core Values outlined later in this document.
- Being at home when the befriender collects and returns the child.
- Withdrawal from befriending should not be used as a punishment. It takes time to develop a relationship with the child and if meetings are cancelled, it takes longer to establish the relationship and therefore limits the benefits.

- Please be flexible with times/days for outings. Our befrienders are valued volunteers. They may have other commitments in their life and may need to re-arrange outings.
- You are not required to give your child spending money for these outings, a small allowance is available to the befriender if required.

Questions you may have

Will I have to pay towards the outings?

There is no charge to parents for the service we offer. Volunteers may claim travel expenses and there is a fund for outings and activities. Being a charity, funds are limited and we rely on donations and fund-raising activities for Fun In Action.

How do we decide which child to match with which befriender?

We take into account interests, personality, family background and look for similarities between the child and the potential befriender. Your comments and your feelings are a crucial part of this 'matching' process.

Will the befriender come at a set time every week/fortnight?

It is up to parents/carers to make their own arrangements with their child's befriender. It's really what suits both parties. Some may come on a regular day at a regular time and others may prefer a more flexible arrangement.

What about my other children - is there anything for them?

We have regular outings and events where everyone comes along and has a good time. We also have the 1st Saturday club @ Fun in Action! This meets on the 1st Saturday of each month and families and siblings are welcome to come along. The club is held at Brighton Youth Centre, 64 Edward Street, BN2 0JR from 2-5pm. Usually one child is befriended in a family and then if that goes well and the other children are interested then we will look for befrienders for them as well.

Before we can accept your child on the scheme:

- Your home situation needs to be relatively stable, i.e. you are unlikely to be moving out of the Brighton & Hove area within the next 2 years.
- You need to discuss the idea fully with your child and you both need to agree that having a befriender is a good idea.
- Your child needs to be between 4 and 14 years of age at point of referral and be the kind of child who would be able to make a relationship and benefit from it.
- As you will be making arrangements with the befrienders for taking your child out regularly, your home situation needs to be such that you can fit in with these arrangements on a regular basis.
- Befrienders want to give some of their time on a voluntary basis to help a child. They are not professional child-care workers. If your child has extreme behavioural difficulties or complex needs, there may be a longer period of waiting for a suitable befriender. Please speak to the child & Family support Worker at Fun In Action if this is the case.

- We will be sensitive with any information you provide and if there are any particular details you would prefer not to disclose to the befriender, we will respect your wishes. We also ask you to respect the privacy of any personal details disclosed about your child's befriender.
- Please note that Fun In Action operates a Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy, enclosed in the pack, which means that any personal information is shared on the strict understanding that it is entirely confidential to Fun In Action. It will not be disclosed to a third party outside the organisation without your consent, except in very particular circumstances.
- **Fun in Action is legally bound to conform to the Children's Act 1989/2004. In the event of any suspicions, investigations, court order, or legal action, Fun in Action will be required to disclose personal information without your consent. We will ensure that if this does occur you, as a parent, will be notified why this information needs to be shared and who will be told.**
- We are registered with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) and:
 1. All records containing the personal details of families belonging to the scheme are kept securely filed in locked cabinets.
 2. Information about families, which is stored on computers are securely protected by pass codes.
 3. Parents can have access to their files providing the Fun in Action staff is notified in advance.
 4. Fun In Action will continue to hold the family file until you withdraw from the scheme.

If you would like to know more about our scheme or anything is not clear do give us a call.

OUR CORE VALUES AND ETHOS

This is FUN In Action's core values which we aim to abide by at all times.

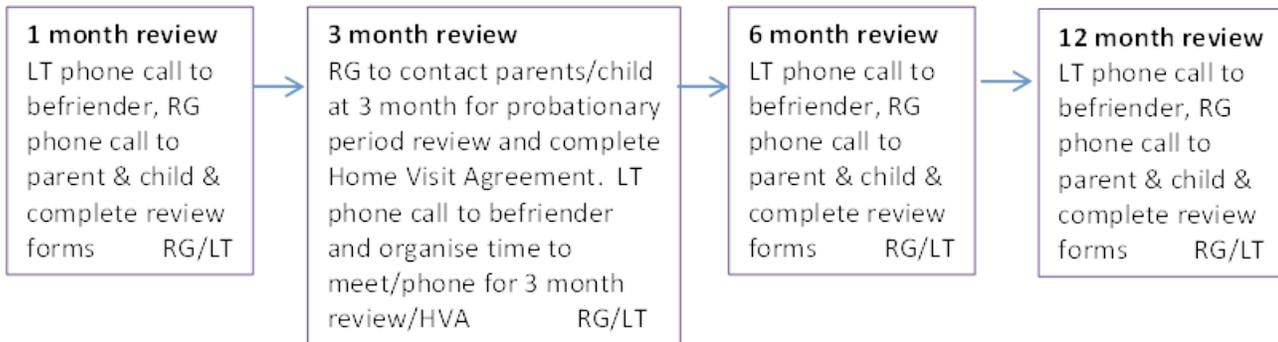
- ◆ *To respect and safeguard the dignity, worth, and rights of all children, their families and befrienders as individuals, regardless of race, colour, religion, gender, disability, age or sexual orientation.*
- ◆ *To regard the welfare and protection of the organisation's clients as the primary professional duty.*
- ◆ *To prioritise the effectiveness and quality of the befrienders' friendships with the children and their families.*
- ◆ *To be personally responsible, whether as a befriender, employee or member of the Management Committee, for conduct with regard to serving the mission of the organisation, and achieving its aim and strategic objectives in a cost-effective and ethical manner.*
- ◆ *To maintain an objective, non-possessive, non-judgemental professional relationship with those served at all times.*
- ◆ *To adhere to the organisation's statement on confidentiality always and in all contexts.*
- ◆ *To be committed to continuously providing the highest standards of care, ensuring that clients are aware of the range and level of service they can expect.*
- ◆ *To ensure that all those involved in the organisation's work are personally and collectively responsible for assuring the achievement of standards and improving the quality of care and service, and to support the organisation's quality policy and its self assessment and evaluation procedures.*
- ◆ *To seek, value and respond to feedback from clients, other service users and stakeholders.*

We ask all FUN in Action befrienders to respect and abide by these values.

What happens once your child is matched?

Once a suitable befriender is found, we will contact you to discuss a possible match. If this match sounds suitable, then we arrange a home visit for the potential befriender to meet you and your child, accompanied by a Fun in Action team member. This visit is approximately 40 minutes for everyone to meet and get to know each other. We will leave the Parent Consent Form with you at this visit. On the next available working day after the visit, you will be contacted to see if you wish to proceed with the match. If everyone is in agreement with the match progressing, we ask that you complete, sign and return the Parent Consent Form to us. We will pass this onto the Befriender who will contact you to arrange the first outing and we will also provide you with the Befrienders contact details at this stage. We will then check in with you, your child and befriender following the first outing.

Fun in Action continues to fulfil ongoing Monitoring with you, your child and their befriender for a 2 year period outlined below:



Useful Websites:

- **Family Information Service (FIS):** A really useful service giving information and advice about childcare and services for families. Tel: 01273 293545, Email address: familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- **Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSBC):** Provide a range of information for parents, children and young people, information & resources and much more. Website: www.brightonandhovelscb.org.uk
- **Digital Parenting Website provided by Vodafone Foundation.** Magazine included in pack. This is a really useful website for parents. It is used by the police and schools to provide IT/digital information about social media and forums and so much more. Visit their website on <https://parentzone.org.uk/projects/digital-parenting-magazine>