

## Buddying and Shadowing – Guide for ECs

### Role of the EC in identifying a buddy for a new EA

The objective of an EA buddy system is to enhance the new EA's experience of the role, and aid retention.

The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) recommends that all EAs are offered the opportunity to be assigned a more experienced EA as a buddy, as part of the onboarding process. This should be organised after the induction process and builds on the induction to understand how the role works in practice.

You may feel on occasions that you have recruited an EA with significant relevant experience who doesn't require a buddy. Having a buddy is intended to provide peer-to-peer support to enable the new EA to make an impact more rapidly on their school or college. It is the new EA's choice whether to take up the offer of a buddy.

The buddy will be an additional point of contact for up to six months, expanding the professional network of both EAs. The role of buddy is intended to complement – not replace – your role as an EC.

The advantages to the new EA of having a buddy are:

- A source of reassurance when needed, helping to increase confidence
- An extension to the induction process – how things 'really' get done
- Someone 'like them' to refer questions to
- A source of practical advice on what works well
- An expanded network
- Being able to add value more quickly

The advantages to the buddy are:

- Recognition as a high impact EA
- An expanded network
- A new perspective on the EA experience
- Enhanced leadership skills
- A way of evolving within the volunteer role

### Who should you invite to become a buddy to a new EA?

- Consider how long they have been an EA and the quality of the relationship with their school. Length of service may not indicate a strong relationship with a school. Look for depth of experience, including having overcome barriers, and progress achieved.
- Do they have time to give support? This shouldn't be a resource-intensive role, but they should be willing to meet (geography-permitting), answer emails and organise phone calls when required.

- Do they have complementary skillsets? If both are to benefit from the buddy system, they should be able to learn from each other. They may come from different sectors or have different areas of expertise.
- Is the buddy willing to take on the role? Once the benefits are made clear, if the potential buddy is reluctant, an alternative should be sought.
- Is the EA a change agent in their school?

### The role of the buddy

- To offer encouragement to the new EA, to reaffirm their decision to commit to the Network, and smooth the transition into the role
- To offer advice and guidance, based on their own experiences of being matched to a school
- To highlight the resources or approaches they've found most useful
- To make introductions to others in their network if/when relevant
- To proactively reach out and check all is well.

### Shadowing

While assigning a buddy to a new EA should be a standard part of the induction process, the opportunity for a new EA to shadow a more experienced EA should be used more selectively. This would be of most use for new EAs who are not confident or experienced in a school environment and could involve the new EA attending a meeting at the host's school, to observe how the meeting is conducted.

The EC for the shadowed school should obtain the relevant permissions.

The advantages of shadowing for the new EA are:

- Learning from a more experienced Enterprise Adviser
- Benefiting from best practice examples of engaging with SLT
- Understanding the relationships and dynamics within the school environment
- Expanding their network.

The advantages for the host are:

- The opportunity to share their experience and best practice
- The opportunity to view and reflect on their own experiences, supported by the "fresh eyed" view of the visiting EA
- Developing their mentoring skills

Consider the following when assigning a host for a new EA to shadow:

- Do they have a lack of knowledge and experience of a school environment? Observing another meeting might increase their confidence and enable them to add value more quickly
- Is there a similar school to their matched school that they could shadow? It would also be helpful if the school was at a similar stage in their careers journey.
- Is the school likely to give permission for an observation? Schools that are making good progress against their Benchmarks are more likely to agree to a shadowing experience.
- Does the EA that would be the host have the capacity to support? They would need to brief and debrief with the new EA.

### Notes for the new EA prior to shadowing a school/college meeting

For a shadowing experience to be successful, you should:

- Consider what you would like to gain from the experience, by identifying some key questions and sharing them with your host

- Do your research by reading your induction pack and associated documents
- Book a briefing conversation with the EA who is hosting ahead of the meeting
- Make time for a review afterwards, providing your host with reflections on what you have observed
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.