

BUDDY MENTOR PROGRAM

Program Framework

Peer-to-peer support for new and existing team members, trainees and students on placement

Internal Learning & Development Document

Delivery platform: Ausmed | Duration: 1–2 hours | Structure: 7 modules

Planned rollout: November 2026

Program Purpose

The Buddy Mentor Program equips experienced team members with the knowledge, skills and confidence to provide effective peer-to-peer support to colleagues who are new to the organisation, undertaking a traineeship or student placement, or developing new skills in their current role.

A Buddy Mentor provides practical, on-the-job support — modelling good practice, encouraging questions, coaching through learning experiences, giving constructive feedback and helping build confidence over time.

Learning at work isn't only about completing formal training. New and developing team members need someone approachable they can turn to with questions, practise skills alongside, reflect on experiences with, and better understand how to apply what they're learning day to day. The Buddy Mentor Program gives integrated living a consistent, organisation-wide approach to that peer support.

The program is designed for integrated living's Home Care and Community settings, and supports the organisation's ongoing alignment with the Aged Care Quality Standards. The strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards that bring a stronger focus on safe, quality, rights-based care and measurable workforce requirements.

The Buddy Mentor Program contributes directly to this regulatory context — building frontline workforce capability, embedding safe and person-centred practice from day one, and giving new and developing team members consistent, practical support to meet these expectations.

What is a Buddy Mentor?

A Buddy Mentor is an experienced team member who provides peer-to-peer guidance and support to a team member during a period of onboarding, learning or skill development. A Buddy Mentor helps the learner to:

- Understand how things are done in the workplace
- Apply their knowledge and skills in practical situations
- Ask questions and seek clarification
- Practice new skills safely and confidently
- Reflect on experiences and identify learning opportunities
- Build confidence and independence over time
- Understand workplace expectations, processes and team culture
- Recognise when additional support or escalation is needed

A Buddy Mentor is a supportive peer and role model — not a formal supervisor, assessor or performance manager.

Who Can a Buddy Mentor Support?

Learner group	How the Buddy Mentor helps
New team members	Onboarding and workplace integration
Trainees	Developing and applying skills while completing their qualification
Students	Workplace learning during placement experiences
Existing team members	Developing new skills, taking on new responsibilities or building capability
Team members needing extra support	Peer guidance where appropriate and within the Buddy Mentor's role

The Purpose of the Buddy Mentor Role

Observe → Ask → Coach → Support → Escalate

Area	What this means in practice
Observe	Take the time to observe how the team member is progressing, how they approach tasks and where they may need further guidance or support. Look for strengths, learning opportunities and potential gaps in knowledge, skills or confidence.
Ask	Use open and supportive questions to understand the team member's experience, encourage them to think through situations and identify what they understand or where they may need help. Create an environment where asking questions is encouraged.
Coach	Help the team member develop their skills and understanding through practical guidance, demonstration, practice, reflection and feedback. Encourage the team member to think through situations and develop their own capability rather than simply providing the answer.
Support	Provide encouragement, reassurance and practical assistance as the team member develops confidence. Recognise progress and strengths, reinforce positive practice and help the team member understand workplace expectations and processes.
Escalate	Recognise when an issue is outside the Buddy Mentor's role, scope or capability. Seek guidance or escalate concerns through the appropriate channel, particularly where there are safety, clinical, performance, conduct or wellbeing concerns.

How the Approach Works

The five areas are **not a rigid step-by-step process**. They provide a simple framework that Buddy Mentors can draw on depending on the situation.

For example, a Buddy Mentor may:

Observe how a team member approaches a task → **Ask** questions to understand their thinking → **Coach** them through an opportunity to improve → **Support** them to practise again and build confidence → **Escalate** if the issue requires assistance beyond the Buddy Mentor's role.

This approach keeps the focus on **learning, confidence and capability**, while maintaining clear professional boundaries and appropriate escalation pathways.

What the Buddy Mentor Role Includes

On-the-job guidance: Demonstrating safe, person-centred practice; explaining workplace processes and expectations; supporting the learner to practice skills appropriately; encouraging questions and clarification.

Role modelling: Demonstrating professional behaviour, communication and appropriate workplace boundaries; demonstrating effective client engagement; consistently reflecting organisational values and standards.

Confidence building: Creating an approachable, supportive learning environment; encouraging questions and curiosity; recognising progress and strengths; supporting the learner toward greater independence.

Coaching for learning: Using questions to help the learner think things through; encouraging reflection on workplace experiences; helping the learner identify what they know, what they need to learn, and where to find it.

Quality and safety reinforcement: Reinforcing safe work practice and organisational requirements; identifying skills gaps or concerns early; supporting the learner to seek the right assistance; escalating clinical, safety, conduct or performance concerns.

Team and workplace integration: Helping the learner understand team practices and expectations; introducing them to other team members and relevant contacts; supporting a sense of belonging; helping them see how their role connects to the wider team and organisation.

What the Buddy Mentor Role Does Not Include

Clear boundaries keep the role supportive and appropriate.

A Buddy Mentor does not:

- Replace the Team Leader (supervisor/manager)
- Conduct formal performance management
- Act as a formal assessor unless specifically authorised as part of another role
- Provide clinical advice outside their scope of practice
- Take responsibility for another team member's work
- Ignore or manage concerns that require formal escalation
- Provide counselling or ongoing personal support beyond the boundaries of the role
- Complete work on behalf of the learner instead of supporting them to learn it
- Work outside their own scope of practice, skills or organisational responsibilities

The Buddy Mentor supports learning and capability — they do not take on responsibility for the learner.

Core Capabilities of an Effective Buddy Mentor

Core workplace capabilities: person-centred practice, strong communication skills, personal care and daily living support capability (where relevant), safety and compliance awareness, professional and ethical practice, teamwork and collaboration, emotional intelligence and resilience, commitment to continuous learning, understanding of scope of practice, accurate documentation and compliance practice, and reliability and professionalism.

Key interpersonal skills: empathy, active listening, patience, emotional regulation, respectful communication, flexibility and adaptability, cultural awareness, problem solving, team collaboration, reliability and accountability, curiosity, and a coaching mindset.

Training Program Modules

The program is made up of seven modules that build progressively — from understanding the role through to applying effective mentoring and role-modelling practice.

Module 1 — Understanding the Buddy Role

Purpose: Establish a clear understanding of what it means to be a Buddy Mentor, and the responsibilities and boundaries of the role.

Key content: What is a Buddy Mentor? Purpose and expectations of the role; Supporting different types of learners; Responsibilities and boundaries; being a peer role model; Understanding scope of practice; Recognising when to seek help or escalate; supporting learning without taking over.

Buddy Mentors will be able to: *understand their role, responsibilities and boundaries, and recognise when an issue needs to be escalated.*

Module 2 — Communicating with Confidence

Purpose: Develop the communication skills needed to build effective working relationships and give clear, supportive guidance.

Key content: Active listening; asking effective questions; Communicating clearly, respectfully, and adapting to the individual; Showing empathy and checking understanding; Responding to questions and uncertainty; de-escalating challenging interactions; Knowing when to seek additional support.

Buddy Mentors will be able to: *communicate confidently and respectfully, and create an environment where learners feel comfortable asking questions.*

Module 3 — Building Psychological Safety and Trust

Purpose: Help Buddy Mentors create a safe, inclusive environment where learners can ask questions, make mistakes, practice and learn.

Key content: What psychological safety means at work; building trust; Creating an approachable learning environment; normalising questions and learning; Responding constructively to mistakes; Respect, inclusion and recognising individual differences and learning needs; Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

Buddy Mentors will be able to: *build trust and create a learning environment where team members feel safe to ask questions and develop their skills.*

Module 4 — Coaching for Learning

Purpose: Introduce simple coaching techniques that help learners build understanding, skills and confidence.

Key content: Coaching versus telling; using questions to encourage thinking; Demonstrate, practice and reflect; supporting problem solving; Encouraging learner independence; Recognising different stages of learning; using everyday situations as learning opportunities; Knowing when to step in and when to let the learner practice.

Buddy Mentors will be able to: *use simple coaching techniques to support skill development, while encouraging learners toward independence.*

Module 5 — Giving Helpful Feedback

Purpose: Build confidence in giving feedback that is clear, respectful, timely and focused on learning.

Key content: Why feedback matters; recognising strengths and progress; Giving constructive feedback focused on behaviour and practice, not the person; Giving feedback in the moment; Balancing positive reinforcement with room for improvement; Responding when feedback isn't well received; knowing when feedback should be escalated.

Buddy Mentors will be able to: *give supportive, constructive feedback that reinforces good practice and encourages improvement.*

Module 6 — Supporting Wellbeing and 'Incidental' Counselling

Purpose: Equip Buddy Mentors to respond appropriately when a colleague shares a concern or is struggling, while maintaining professional boundaries.

Key content: What incidental counselling means; listening and responding with empathy; Providing appropriate peer support; Recognising when someone may need additional support; Maintaining professional boundaries; avoiding taking on a counselling role; Appropriate referral and escalation pathways; looking after your own wellbeing.

Buddy Mentors will be able to: *respond with empathy and support while maintaining appropriate boundaries, and know when and how to refer or escalate.*

Module 7 — Role Modelling Professional Practice

Purpose: Reinforce the Buddy Mentor's role as a model of safe, person-centred and professional workplace practice.

Key content: What it means to be a role model; demonstrating organisational values; Professional communication and conduct; person-centred practice; Safe and compliant practice; professional boundaries; Curiosity, meaning-making and reflecting on workplace experiences; Using reflection to support better decisions; continuing to learn and develop.

Buddy Mentors will be able to: *understand the influence they have as a role model, and consistently demonstrate behaviours that support safe, respectful, high-quality practice.*

Learning Outcomes for the Program

By the end of the Buddy Mentor Program, participants will be able to:

1. **Explain** the purpose, responsibilities and boundaries of the Buddy Mentor role.
2. **Communicate** confidently, clearly and respectfully with the team members they support.
3. **Create** a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that encourages learning and questions.
4. **Use** simple coaching techniques to support workplace learning, skill development and confidence.
5. **Provide** clear, respectful and constructive feedback that supports learning and improvement.
6. **Respond** appropriately to wellbeing concerns while maintaining professional boundaries and recognising when referral or additional support is required.
7. **Model** safe, person-centred and professional workplace practices.
8. **Recognise** when a concern is outside the Buddy Mentor's role, scope or capability and seek appropriate support or escalate the concern.
9. **Encourage** reflection, curiosity and independent learning to help team members develop their own capability.
10. **Support** new and developing team members to build confidence, capability and independence over time.

Program Delivery

The Buddy Mentor Program is a practical approx.3-4 hour learning program delivered through integrated living learning platform, Ausmed, and will be available as an on-shelf resource for use as required for leaders to schedule their team members to complete the learning.

It is designed so team leaders can schedule team members to complete the learning in readiness to build and develop capability and support new and developing team members and then apply the principles within their Buddy Mentor responsibilities.

The learning package includes: seven structured learning modules that build out around practical workplace scenarios. To ensure learning transfer the program will include interactive learning activities, reflection questions, knowledge checks, practical examples relevant to frontline workers, clear guidance on role boundaries and escalation, and resources to support application in the workplace.

What Success Looks Like

The Buddy Mentor Program aims to establish a consistent and sustainable approach to peer-to-peer support across the organisation. Success will be reflected through the positive outcomes for the team member being supported, the Buddy Mentor and the organisation.

For New and Developing Team Members	For Buddy Mentors	For the Organisation
Confidence & Capability Greater confidence to perform their role, practise new skills and work more independently.	Mentoring Capability Greater confidence in supporting, coaching and guiding colleagues.	Consistent Support A consistent approach to peer support across teams and locations.
Learning & Development Increased willingness to ask questions, seek clarification and learn from workplace experiences.	Communication & Feedback Stronger communication, coaching and constructive feedback skills.	Workplace Learning Culture A stronger culture of learning, knowledge sharing and continuous development.
Workplace Integration Improved understanding of workplace expectations and stronger connection with colleagues and the team.	Professional Practice Greater understanding of professional boundaries, role responsibilities and appropriate escalation.	Onboarding & Integration Improved support for new team members, trainees, students and team members developing new skills.
Supported Practice Greater opportunity to practise, apply and reflect on skills in real workplace situations.	Leadership Development Development of informal leadership and peer mentoring capability.	Quality & Safety Earlier identification of capability and support needs, with reinforcement of safe, person-centred and professional practice.
Independence Team members progressively build the confidence and capability to work independently.	Contribution & Connection Experienced team members are supported to share their knowledge and contribute to the development of others.	Talent & Capability Pathways Strengthened internal capability and opportunities to develop future talent and leadership pathways.