

Things you only know if you're a Gig Buddy



By Emma Joyce

Posted: Thursday February 14 2019, 12:10pm



Photograph: Daniel Boud
(L-R): Gig Buddy Will and volunteer David

... according to David Lawrence-Watt, 25, and Will Curtis, 19

It really is a matchmaking service

David: "I've been with Gig Buddies since June. I was living abroad and I decided to sign up when I returned. There's an online questionnaire to give **Gig Buddies** an idea of your personality, interests and hobbies, then they try to match you with someone [with a learning disability] who lives locally, of similar age, and usually the same gender (if they can). There's a lot of thought that goes into the pairs. I no longer consider it to be volunteering – Will's a friend that Gig Buddies helped me make."

Will: "I feel like I've chosen the right buddy. He's an easy guy to talk to and to organise things with. I go out with my family, but with David he has quite good music taste and even if he suggests artists I've never heard of before I still like going out with him."

It means Will's mum gets the night off

David: "Your mum was having to go to gigs that you were into, like that Canadian hip-hop artist Night Lovell. Imagine if I was around back then and we could have gone together."

Will: "She doesn't like hip hop. Tonight she's going to a book launch in Newtown and I'd find that boring. That's where I would have been tonight. This way we all win."

Gig Buddies source the tickets

David: "They post tickets on a group for volunteers, and it's first-come, first-served. We went to Bloc Party with another Gig Buddies pair. We got Frank Turner tickets too. But when it's acts that we're into, like Eminem, we bought those. We've been consciously doing smaller, cheaper things together, too, like playing basketball and swimming."

Going to a busy, loud bar isn't ideal

Will: "I don't like when it's too crowded, or if it's too late, or how loud the music explosion is. I love when other pairs double up with us."

David: "Will doesn't drink, and doesn't particularly like the atmosphere of a busy bar, so we also go to the movies and see comedy shows. We love live music, but just going to a bar pumping music isn't our idea of a good time."

Photograph: Daniel Boud

There might be moshing

Will: "It's awesome. My favourite part is being in the audience. I think the mosh pit was a bit much. Too much, too busy. It was fun though."

David: "**Bloc Party** was Will's first time in the mosh pit. Will's on the shorter side, so I was worried about him getting trampled on. We were at the **Hordern Pavilion**, so when we'd had enough we could go and sit in the stands, which gave us a good view of all that confetti."

It's important that venues treat patrons with disability like people

David: "Shout out to **Hustle and Flow** because, before our first gig, I messaged the manager and he said they love the work that Gig Buddies do. He gave us free entry and told the acts that we were from Gig Buddies, so they came over and shook our hands. It was our first night and I was nervous, so it was just fantastic."

Will: "I like it here because they do a lot of freestyle battles here, and they do good food – great burgers."

Gig Buddies need more male volunteers

David: "Volunteers tend to be 50/50 male-female, but there are more male Buddies, so they're always looking for more male volunteers. But everyone's welcome to volunteer. It's not one-size-fits-all."

Being a Gig Buddy challenges your ignorance



David: "When I went into the program, I was expecting to have to do a lot of heavy lifting, socially – and that's my ignorance. I really wasn't expecting that level of connection with someone. I thought we'd just hang out and listen to music. It challenged my preconceived ideas – that's the biggest takeaway for me."