

Stories from Young People

"BBBS has helped me in many ways. Each week I am learning new skills with my Big Sister, like jewellery making and baking cookies. It has also helped to build my confidence. I would like to be a big sister when I am older so that I can help out someone else." Little Sister. Download our [Stories Booklet](#) [1] for more heartwarming stories about involvement in the BBBS Programme.

Watch Isaac and see what he has to say about being a Little

The story of a Big and a Little

No man is an island and if anything could fully embody this spirit of friendship, mentoring and sharing it would be Foróige's Big Brother Big Sister programme. Volunteers display the ultimate in generosity ? that of giving their time. A young person in need of a positive role model gets that and so much more! A parent sees their child flourish in a way they never previously thought possible. In 2011 young people were matched with adult volunteers in Dublin, Westmeath, Galway, Cork, Roscommon, Offaly, Mayo, Cavan, Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo and Kilkenny.

29-year-old mature student Annette Kennedy and 13-year-old Foróige member Jessica Phelan in West Dublin have a Big Sister Little Sister partnership. They share an interest in baking, shopping, going to the cinema and they even work out at the gym together. Jessica explains, *"Annette is lot of fun to be around. At first it was a little weird being around someone I didn't know but now we have great craic. Annette is now one of my best friends and I always look forward to seeing her."*

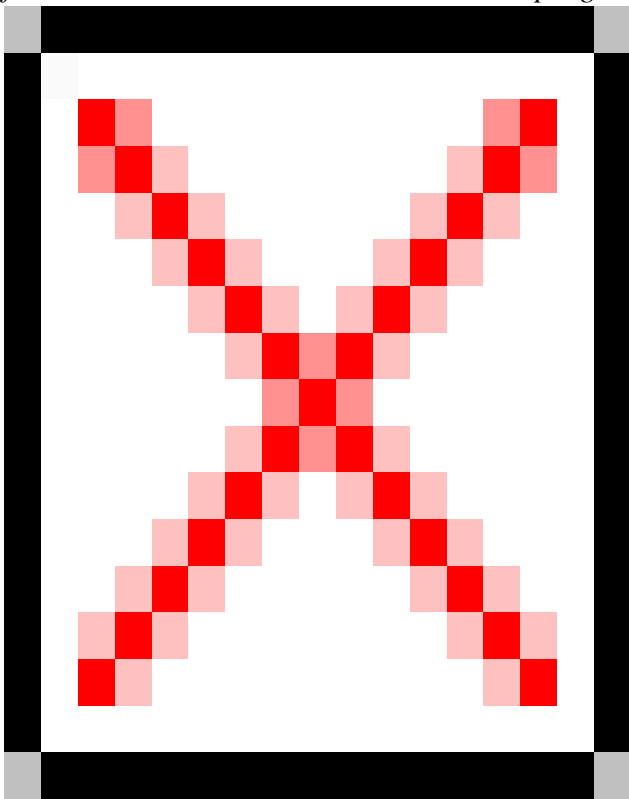
Annette has noticed some really positive changes, *"Jessica has gained a lot of confidence which allows her to see that she is a great person to be around. She is quiet by nature but now Jessica is emerging from her shell. Her father died when she was just 18 months old and when we first met, Jessica hadn't read a full book. Now she reads all the time and we chat about what we've read. From a personal point of view meeting Jessica has been an invaluable experience for me because I am currently training to become a teacher. I am now much better prepared for the profession."*

Jessica's mom Yvonne says that Big Brother Big Sister has lifted a huge weight off her shoulders. *"Jessica holds everything back and she won't open up at home because she's afraid of upsetting me. It's a huge relief that she now has someone to talk to because she actually does confide in Annette. Her confidence has sky-rocketed and that really is thanks to Big Brother Big Sister."*

BBBS Testimonials

?My Little Sister and I have been meeting up since September 2009. Just before Christmas, one of our activities was painting. We used acrylic paints and had a lot of fun with them even though I hadn't painted since I was a child. She however was very good and the picture she made that day was beautiful. It was of a tree with blossoms on and three birds in the sky but the part that really made it special for me was a shaft of light that came from the sky over the tree and lit up the ground around the tree. And furthermore, the paints we were using only came from the pound shop! I was really impressed with her gift for art and she inspired me to have a go at painting a proper picture myself, which in due course I did.

However the best was yet to come. On Mother's Day, my Little Sisters' family invited me to dinner with them at their home. We had a lovely meal and desert and chatted about all sorts. Then my Little Sister disappeared for a moment but returned to the room with a gift wrapped package in her hands. She presented me with it and it turned out to be the picture, framed and with a lovely note on the back hand written by her. I was deeply touched by her thoughtfulness and delighted to hang the picture in pride of place in my kitchen. It catches people's eye and they ask about the picture. I am proud to tell them about my very gifted young friend and also tell them about the BBBS program and how rewarding it is to be involved."



Big Brothers & Big Sisters Say

?I was fortunate enough to have adults in my life growing up that I could turn to for advice and support if I needed it. I would like to think that I could offer the same to someone else, and this programme provided me with the opportunity to do so." Big Brother

"Being a Big Brother has been very rewarding over the past 2 years. It is great to see how our friendship has grown from the first few very quiet meetings to the constant chat we enjoy now. The weekend spent in the Delphi resort was a great "get to know you" experience and the Bigs and Littles seemed to enjoy it equally. It was hard to tell who was who at times. It was also great to meet up with other matches and share stories. I would recommend it to anyone who has a few spare hours a week to give." Big Brother

"It's good fun - myself and my little brother have a bit of craic together, and I try to encourage and support him in the things he has going on. When we meet he asks about my week too, which is nice."

Big Brother, Dublin

"I have a strong belief that young people need alternatives to what is available nowadays.... the Big Brother Big Sister Programme is a nice alternative, and it is a way for me to contribute to that, so rather than just saying it, it's a matter of doing it!" Big Brother, Galway

"This has been a fantastic opportunity for me and my little brother. We are matched now over a year and this weekend has really opened my eyes as to how much he has matured during this time, in terms of his confidence in his interaction with other young people and adults. We went surfing this morning, the two of us were in the one canoe trying to get it to go in the one direction. He was instructing me! It was hilarious.?" Big Brother, National Event, Delphi Adventure Centre

"My Little Sister and I have done lots of fun things together and each week I look forward to meeting her. She is a delight to be with and we always have a laugh. Last week we chased the sunset until we got to a place where we could watch the sun sink into the sea! It's not everyone you could do that with, is it??" Big Sister, Donegal

"I can't imagine life without my Little Sister now. She is a wonderful addition to my life." Big Sister

"The boy I am matched with doesn't have great role models in his life, so it is helpful for him to be taken out of his day-to-day situation and gain a new perspective." Big Brother, Dublin

"Regarding my experience with BBBS, it has been nothing but positive to date. Myself and my little sister get on well and I feel that we were very well matched. We have a lot in common and it's normally pretty easy to pick something that we both want to do. Since Christmas we have managed to meet nearly every week and I think it's made a big difference. There aren't many silences anymore and she is much more chatty than in the beginning. She has come out to my house a couple of times - we made pizza from scratch one day and made pancakes on Pancake Tuesday. Another week we spent a day in Carrick-On-Shannon, going to Kidz Kingdom and doing a bit of shopping. We've brought my dog out for walks and we've gone swimming. My little sister has big plans for the summer months! She wants us to go to Waterworld in Bundoran, go fishing and go to Dublin for the day to go to the zoo." Big Sister

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"The programme is an excellent way for volunteers to engage with young people through common interests and talents. The friendship that develops assists the young person to become a productive and healthy adult. Volunteers are the backbone of the programme. Their commitment to making a positive difference in the life of a young person is to be admired as it is a valuable resource to the community here." Staff member, Sligo

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Littles Say

?I got to do things I didn't do before and made a new friend.? Little Sister, Galway

?I have a friend who I can tell anything to because I trust her.? Little Sister, Mayo

?I have got more confident and can be myself around people. Thank you for your help, you've made a difference.? Little Sister, Dublin

?Thank you, I get to do things I wouldn't otherwise do, like go to the theatre.? Little Sister, Dublin

?I love being a part of this and I love everything about it, especially when I'm down I have someone to talk to.? Little Sister, Mayo

?Your kindness meant that I can hang out with my Big Sister and chat to her about happy and sad things. It was a very good experience for me.? Little Sister, Westmeath

?I now have the confidence to stay on at school.? Little Brother, Donegal

?To have a friend for life, that gave me the confidence to stand up and sing in front of a crowd.? Little Brother, Sligo

?When I'm down I now have a friend I can talk to.? Little Sister, Westmeath

?I have a close friend forever.? Little Brother, Monaghan.

Parents Say

"The programme has been great for my daughter. Her big sister has given her that bit of extra support that she really needed." Parent

"Applying to the programme is one of the best things I have ever done for my son. I have already noticed a big improvement in his self confidence. He really looks forward to it every week." Parent

"It has been a great success. My son gets on great with his big brother and it has given him a really good male role model. Before the programme he didn't have any a male influence in his life. Now he has someone to play football with go fishing with and all those kind of things." Parent

Big Brother Big Sister Staff Say

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Links:

[1] https://www.foiroige.ie/sites/default/files/stories_booklet.pdf