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THE BIG HOUSE THEATRE COMPANY, STUDIO 41, HACKNEY DOWNS STUDIOS, AMHURST TERRACE, LONDON E8 2BT  
PHONE: 0203 095 9754 / EMAIL: INFO@BIGHOUSETHEATRE.ORG.UK

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### **The Big House Mentoring Programme**

#### **Who are The Big House Theatre Company and what do they do?**

The Big House works with care leavers aged 16-25 who are at high risk of social exclusion, enabling and inspiring them through the dramatic arts. We provide a platform for them to participate in the making of theatre and have their voices heard.

The Big House recognises the vulnerability of care leavers as well as their unplumbed talents, hopes and dreams. Through the use of theatre, the development of life skills and therapeutic intervention, The Big House nurtures a relationship of trust with our membership to tackle any behavioural and emotional problems, develop confidence and unleash our members' potential. We build their core skills and offer long term support to help them manage the stressful complexities of taking up a positive role in the community.

The use of theatre develops positive feelings of self-esteem and self-control. We believe that art can be transformative and theatre has the power to help people develop emotional literacy. Our members go on an intensive journey of personal discovery which enables them to communicate with others in a profoundly positive way effecting a psychological, emotional and social change.

The Big House runs a weekly Saturday workshop for young people where the aim is to have fun, take part in drama-based games and activities and form positive relationships with the other members. As well as this, The Big House is currently running an 11 week project, where 12 young people take part in regular weekly workshops focusing on employability and literacy skills, life skills and acting skills. During this programme, the young people work with a professional writer and perform a play to the public based on their own personal experiences.

#### **What does the role involve?**

Our volunteer mentors will give time, encouragement and support to a young member of The Big House. They will meet up with them for a couple of hours every two weeks and make an initial commitment of one year, though can continue beyond this.

You will meet with a young person informally – this could be something like going for a coffee and a chat or going for a walk or to the park. During your time together you will talk about what goals the young person is working on and how they could go about achieving these – goals could be anything from finding a job to getting a new passport. Your role will involve supporting and motivating the young person with the aim of helping them to achieve their goals. These will

have been identified and determined by the young person themselves with the support of The Big House.

Outings are simple and local, and can be anything from visiting a museum or park, to going for a hot chocolate and a chat. Just listening and giving encouragement will have a profoundly positive impact.

### **What will the young people gain?**

The young people involved in The Big House face a range of difficulties, from financial hardship and a lack of positive role models to limited access to opportunities and lack of confidence. Being paired with a mentor can really help them to build confidence, talk to someone openly and feel supported to take steps to move forward with their lives in a positive way.

### **Do I need any qualifications?**

To volunteer with us you do not need any specific qualifications or experience but you will need to be a positive person who leads a full life and is interested in having new experiences and meeting new people. You will need to be patient and friendly and have a good sense of humour! You should also be willing to undergo a (free) CRB/DBS check, and travel regularly to meet with your assigned young person.

### **What will I gain?**

Throughout the mentoring process you will be supported by experienced Big House staff in order to monitor how the relationship is progressing. You will have the opportunity to build a friendship and connect with a young person in your community who will really benefit from your support. You may also find that as a result of volunteering with us, you will develop valuable skills such as effective communication, active listening, and increased empathy. You will become a valuable part of The Big House volunteer team and will also have the opportunity to attend fundraising and publicity events and feel part of The Big House community.