

LINK East Fife Mental Health Befriending Projects

Evaluation Report

**“Thank you for helping to save my life.
Thank you for caring enough to
bother”**

March 2018



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1. Introduction

In January and February 2018 Befriending Networks undertook an external evaluation of LINK – East Fife Mental Health Befriending Projects.

2. Background to LINK

LINK is a registered charity in Scotland, set up in 1996 based on demand from adults with mental health problems and mental health professionals who recognised there was a gap in people's social support which could be met by a befriending project.

The Adult Befriending Project supports 20 adults, aged 18 to 65, in the East Fife area who are isolated as a result of mental health problems. The Adolescent Befriending Project supports 18 adolescents between the ages of 12-18 in East Fife and Levenmouth isolated as a result of mental health problems.

Both LINK projects aim to recruit and train volunteer befrienders who are matched with people who are isolated as a result of their mental health problems. The projects support volunteers while they are matched and also provide group social events for volunteers and befriendees to attend.

Referrals come to the service from various agencies, including health, social work and voluntary sector organisations.

Whilst the projects work with people of very different ages they broadly have the same aims. They include providing companionship, increased social opportunities, support to try out new things and a structure in people's lives, resulting in improved resilience, self-esteem, confidence and mental wellbeing.

LINK is an independent organisation with its own policies, procedures and Management Committee.

3. Background to the evaluation of LINK

In late 2017, LINK requested that Befriending Networks undertake an external evaluation of both the adult and adolescent services. The aim was to obtain feedback from service users, volunteers and stakeholders, see the difference the project has made and critically reflect on the service they provide.

The evaluation involved

- An online survey to befriendees, befrienders and referral agencies including those with a past or present connection to the services
- Face to face or telephone, one to one interviews with 6 befriendees and 4 befrienders from the adult project

- Face to face or telephone interviews with 3 befriendees and 4 befrienders from the adolescent project
- Telephone, one to one interviews with 3 referral agencies

The online survey drew a good rate of response from volunteers (26) and a reasonable response level from referral agencies (6). Response rate for befriendees was also good with 13 from the Adolescent service and 9 from the Adult service.

Acknowledgements

Particular thanks go to LINK's befriendees, volunteers and referral agencies for committing their time and honest feedback to this evaluation. Thanks to staff at LINK for making arrangements for the survey work and the interviews to take place.

Muriel Mowat

Befriending Networks

4. Results - Volunteers

a) Introduction

26 volunteers responded to the online survey; 16 were from the LINK Adolescent Project and 10 for the LINK Adult Project. In addition to the survey 8 volunteers took part in 1-1 interviews either in person or by telephone; 4 were from the Adolescent project and 4 from the Adult project. The majority of those responding from the Adolescent project had been involved for three years or less, while the majority (n 8) of those responding from the Adult project had been involved for five years or more.

50% (n 17) of all volunteers had been matched with one befriender. 10 volunteers with the Adolescent Project and seven with the Adult project had been matched twice or more. Of these one from each project had been matched with 5 or more beneficiaries.

b) Finding Out About LINK

Volunteers found out about LINK and the volunteering opportunities through a range of routes. Many volunteers responded to advertising in the press, in social media or in local Volunteer Centres;

Ad in local newspaper

Advert on Facebook

Dundee Centre for Volunteering

A number had been recruited following information stalls held at university and college events e.g. Freshers' Fair;



I noticed LINK were looking for volunteers when they were doing a marketplace at Elmwood college and picked up a leaflet read about what services link offers to the community ...

Volunteer showcase at university

Via student information centre at St Andrews I got in touch with a public agent who informs about and mediates voluntary activities in Fife

Freshers' fair at St Andrews University

Others had heard from local medical professionals;

Through a CPN

Through the Anstruther medical practice

A few individuals had heard about LINK through a friend and a couple had previously had a befriendee themselves when they were younger.

I was initially a user of the service by referral

c) What attracted you to LINK?

Volunteers identified a range of reasons as to why they had been attracted to LINK as a volunteering opportunity. Many gave several reasons. The most commonly selected option was

Because it was linked to mental health

For those volunteering with the Adolescent project the next most commonly selected option was

The chance to work with young people

Some respondents, instead of selecting offered options, gave different reasons.

Opportunity to try and help others

I really liked all elements about LINK: the regular meetings with a mentor, the regular social activities, the budget we received to organise meetings with the young person, the attitude and know-how of my mentor, the regular training opportunities. It was mainly the quality of the service that attracted me

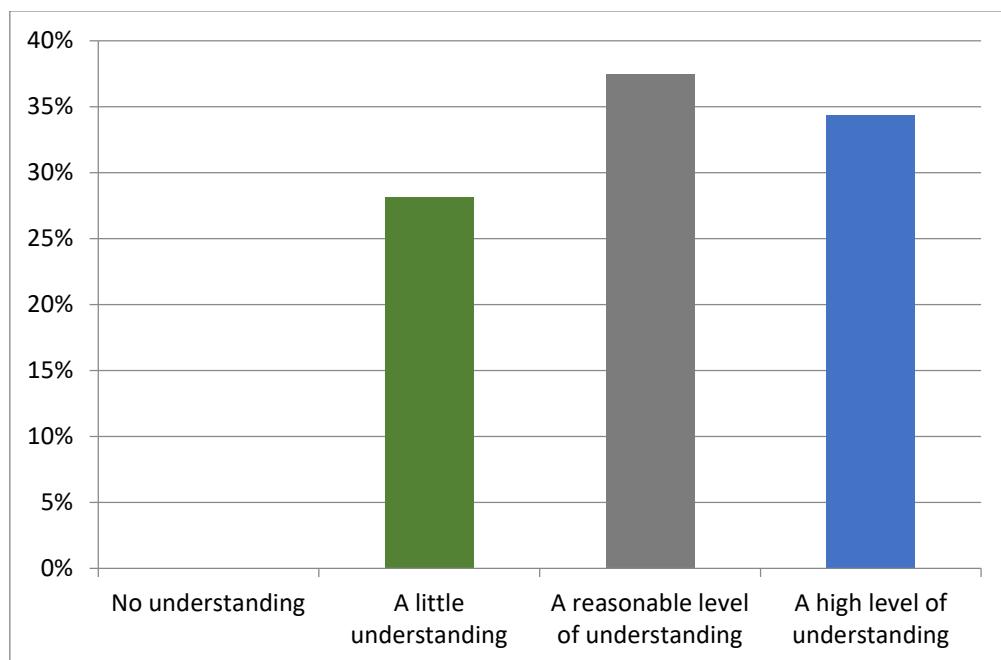
The opportunity to give back to a project which aided my own recovery

d) Impact of befriending role on understanding

Volunteers were asked about their level of understanding of mental health issues and about whether their role had any impact on their attitude towards people with mental health problems.

All respondents felt they had some level of understanding prior to volunteering with LINK:

Before volunteering with LINK how would you describe your level of understanding of the issues faced by people with mental health problems?



Respondents with a reasonable or high level of understanding had personal or family experience of mental health problems or were studying or working in a mental health related field.

Before LINK I worked in a psychiatric hospital and completed an undergraduate Psychology degree

I was studying mental health at uni

My job is working with students with learning difficulties/ autism and older adults with mental health problems / learning disabilities

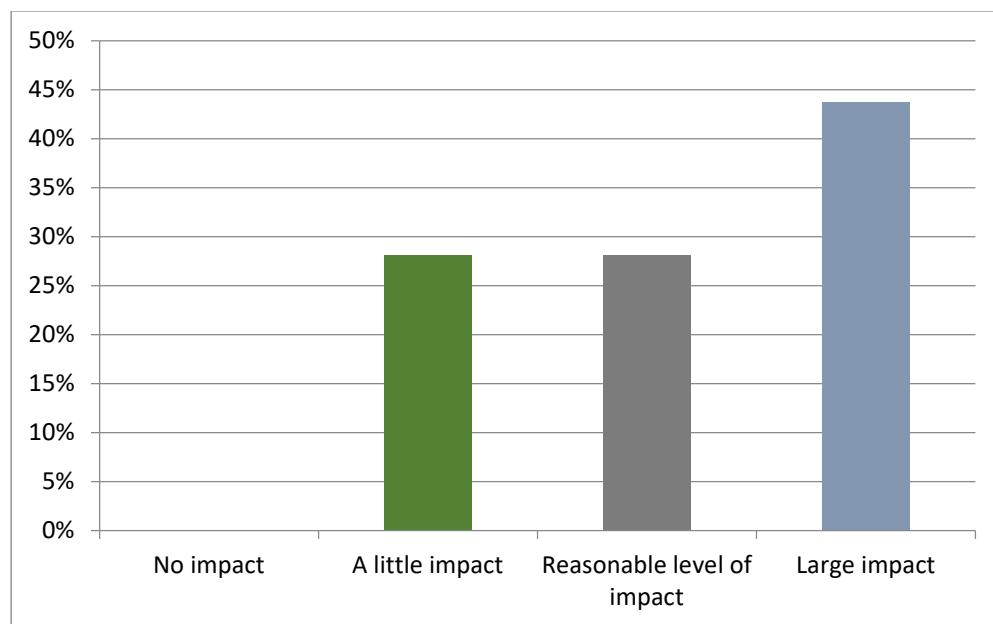
I was aware of some of the issues faced by people with mental health problems from my role as a medical student but befriending gave me a new perspective

I have had mental health problems for some time, understand medication used

Because of the family experience with mental health

All respondents believed that their attitude towards mental health problems had been changed by their experience with LINK.

To what degree has volunteering with LINK had an impact on your attitude towards people with mental health problems?



Eye-opening experience on the reality of mental illness for an individual and their family, no matter what their circumstances

I went on to do a lot more training in mental health. LINK was a wonderful opportunity to develop a friendship with somebody I would otherwise not have met. As a student living in the bubble of St Andrews, the project gave me a different perspective on how life could be so different for other young people living in Fife. I was only young when I volunteered but I think the experience was probably quite fundamental in helping me to see people with mental health problems as just people - and in helping me to start to think about the many factors affecting our mental health

I had my personal experiences, but LINK gave me additional perspectives

e) Initial contact, training and ongoing support

LINK's processes and procedures, following initial contact and registering interest by volunteers, were viewed positively.

Volunteers were asked if they agreed that the initial contact they had with LINK to find out more and to register their interest in becoming a volunteer was handled well:

Strongly agreed – 84% (n 17)

Agreed – 13% (n 4)

Disagreed – 3% (n 1)

It was handled well from beginning to end. I never had to wait long. After registering my interest, I was contacted immediately by Jane and we sat down together in a nice atmosphere to talk it all through and also discuss my motivations and what I could expect

The process was smooth; communication was excellent - prompt responses to queries, helpful and supportive, multiple routes of communication offered (email and phone)

Reaction to the training provided by LINK for potential volunteers was positive.

Volunteers were asked if the training they had received prepared them well for their role. All agreed. 75% (n 14) strongly agreed, 25% (n 8) agreed.

I have to agree strongly. The initial training was comprehensive and informative. And importantly, it was never boring or unnecessary. It was the perfect combination of finding out all that you need to be prepared but also enjoy the training and not be overwhelmed by too much hypothetical, theoretical information. One thing I really valued about the training was that Jane invited three befrienders who are currently working in the project to talk about their experiences. That really helped me to make the information I received more tangible and practical. And I could also ask any questions that were on my mind

Training is really good. We are kept up to date with all relevant training opportunities

Once trained and matched all volunteers agreed that the ongoing support & supervision they receive is at the right level for their role. 88% (n 28) strongly agreed, 12% (n 4) agreed.

The support LINK has given me from when I first joined is amazing, always someone to go to and ask if you have any problems or concerns and so understanding that sometimes things come up and you can't always make your meet up that week

Support and supervision at LINK was great. I could contact Jane, my mentor, at any time and we had regular meetings. Being able to talk about your experiences and how they impact your life and thinking beyond the regular meetings with your befriender was very important to me and this I could do perfectly with Jane

I feel supported and valued

Volunteers were asked what other training (if any) they felt would have helped prepare them for the role. Most replies were that the training provided was excellent and sufficient for the role.

None, what was given beforehand prepared you perfectly for starting your volunteering

A few identified potential training that would be specific to the person with whom they were matched

Only something that would be very specific to my befriendee

My befriendee is autistic, I didn't have any experience working with autistic people and some training may have been helpful

Others reported that ongoing training provided is excellent.

Again, I could not think of more. There were loads of ongoing training opportunities that you could attend. I could not always make it to all of them. But when I did they were very helpful and informative. They also gave one the opportunity to take something away independent of your role as a befriendee but also enriched this

From volunteering at LINK I have had the opportunity to go on training courses run by the NHS such as ASIST, which has been beneficial

Very happy about the level I have received and know that I will be offered a chance to do more training as new knowledge is brought forward

Volunteers were asked what (if any) other support they felt they needed once matched.

Again, I could not think of more. With Jane I had a very passionate and very supportive mentor whom I could always contact and who supported me wonderfully throughout the entire process

Support is always there for you, and you are kept up to date with any new info available to help with support if you feel the need

Some identified possible additional support needs as follows

Sometimes my befriendee has problems, caused by gaps in the care system, so I feel frustrated that I can't suggest options or alternatives

It can be difficult coming up with ideas of what to do. It would be helpful if there were a directory of activities that others have done

f) Personal Impact on volunteers

Volunteers were asked what impact (if any) volunteering at LINK had on them personally. All respondents believe that their volunteering role with LINK has had a positive and, in some cases, a significant impact on them and their lives.

I love working in a group that works. It makes me feel that I am making a difference. I know how professional LINK is and how safe and supported I feel

It has made me a lot more proud of myself. I feel like I have done a good job and helped others. I'm a lot more confident

A massive impact on me as I have suffered from mental health issues before and when I couldn't do what I used to do work wise after a operation I thought I had nothing to do but sit and waste my time away in the house until I found LINK and it has opened my eyes up to the help that is out there from a great service like LINK and the help you bring to others even if it is just meeting for a coffee

LINK has made me realise that I want a career in mental health and working with young people, I am now beginning my masters in social work this year. It has also supplied me with confidence, knowledge, improved my listening skills and interpersonal skills

A massive impact! To describe it all would be a bit too much here. But it has truly made me a better person. It is wonderful to give. But giving can be challenging as well, so I was glad I always received the support that I needed. And with that I could really grow and develop as a person, in my thoughts, my interactions with others, my behaviour.

Altogether, I feel I am a better person because of LINK and am very thankful for that

I have now left LINK and have gone on to work as a clinical psychologist. Volunteering with link helped shaped my views about mental health and developed my skills in working with and communicating with young people with mental health problems

It gave me the opportunity to try and prevent young people from going down similar roads to myself

g) Frequency of meetings

Volunteers were asked how often they met with their befriender. The majority, 75% (n 15) of the Adolescent project and 64% (n 9) of the Adult project, met every 2 weeks. 15% (n 3) of the Adolescent project and 14% (n 2) of the Adult project met every week. The remainder of the volunteers with the Adult project, 21% (n 3), met monthly as did 1 volunteer with the Adolescent project while another Adolescent project volunteer stated that they met 'As needed, directed by befriender '

h) Typical Activities

Volunteers for both the Adolescent and the Adult projects reported a wide range of activities including meeting for coffee or a meal, visiting museums and other visitor attractions, shopping, cinema and theatre trips, different forms of exercise, activities or going for a walk.

The activities are decided on by both befriender and befriender and are responding to an expressed wish or interest of the befriender or can fit within the joint interests of both.

I do different activities with my 2 matches... We go on walks and butterfly houses and walks around the harbour. We like to go for lunch and cuppas and slices of cake and also go clothes shopping, both prefer different activities

After the first few meetings, we always went on train rides because that was the big passion of the adolescent. Typically, we would take a train from the local train station ... to another train station in Scotland. We would then get some lunch at the destination and walk a bit around town but mainly stay at the train station to watch trains until we would take the train back

Typically the activities with the younger people often include cinema trips or forms of physical activity.

Outdoor activities, walking, exploring places or trying new things activities, slack lining, snowboarding, wild foraging

My young person and I enjoy trying new activities together to push ourselves out of our comfort zone. Lately we have been rock climbing, golfing, skating, to the museum, ceramic painting, and we are arranging to try skiing and to visit an alpaca farm



Volunteers reported that, usually, visits included time and opportunities for chat.

Coffees, dinner, nail painting. Anything that gave us the chance to have a nice chat about how things were going and if there were any anxieties or things I could help with

Shopping. Museums. Picnics. Deep conversations. Music festival/cinema. Beach walking

i) Impact on befriendees

Volunteers were asked their views of the impact of befriending on the person/people with whom they were matched. Some gave answers for all matches, others answered only a few. Where volunteers did not agree with the statements in many cases they felt that it was too early in the match to assess change "*I haven't been befriending for that long*". In answering the question on communication, 3 volunteers felt that their befriendee was already a good communicator when they first met.

As a result of befriending the person I am matched with has Increased in Confidence

Strongly agree – 57% (n 24)

Agree – 38% (n 16)

Disagree – 5% (n 2)

My first Befriendee has gone from nought to 10. Love this lady as she tried so hard to be where she is today. It took a team to help. But I enjoyed it very much as she gained confidence step by step week by week. Although a few setbacks arose, I felt I helped guide her in the right direction. She is now flying high and I'm so proud of her

The young person began socialising more with her peers and got a job

My second match didn't care about anything in the world when we were matched, but over time I was able to convince him that he can do something in with his life, and by the end he was discussing college courses etc. I know not how the story ended

As a result of befriending the person I am matched with has Increased in Self-Esteem

Strongly agree – 47% (n 17)

Agree – 42% (n 15)

Disagree – 11% (n 4)

My young person has applied for university and believes he can succeed

A quote from her Christmas card to me - "You have helped me realise that I am important not just as a friend, a mother, or nana but important to myself"

As a result of befriending the person I am matched with is Better able to Cope Emotionally

Strongly agree – 31% (n 10)

Agree – 50% (n 16)

Disagree – 19% (n 6)

From my knowledge, there has been a decrease in self harm behaviour, and he opens up about sensitive issues, but he still struggles emotionally

She has thought about some of her situations and has put herself in the other persons shoes (showing empathy) and also considered her own well-being when faced with the possibility of having to make a decision in a romantic sense

As a result of befriending the person I am matched with has Improved Communication Skills

Strongly agree – 23% (n 8)

Agree – 66% (n 23)

Disagree – 11% (n 4)

My young person speaks to strangers (e.g. cashiers and waitresses), voices his opinion more and this is also reflected in school

She has now a job in a charity shop

I have seen the befriendee's communication improve - they interact in social situations and communicate with other people

As a result of befriending the person I am matched with has become Less Socially Isolated

Strongly agree – 24% (n 9)

Agree – 57% (n 21)

Disagree – 16% (n 6)

Strongly Disagree – 3% (n 1)

Absolutely she's much more likely to go out and do things by herself this would not have happened before, e.g. going to shows by herself or shopping on bus by herself

He now talks about being out and about with friends. He has moved school and talks about meeting up with new school friends

As a result of befriending the person I am matched with has become More Motivated

Strongly agree – 29% (n 10)

Agree – 60% (n 21)

Disagree – 11% (n 4)

Much more motivated has been to gym and swimming by herself will now go to hairdressers etc. by herself

Volunteers were asked about any other changes they had observed which they felt were as a result, wholly or in part, of the befriending relationship.

More open to doing things and taking into consideration what the other person would like to do with activities

More care about her surroundings and in her appearance

His increase in confidence has brought out his sense of humour. The level of honesty between us has grown; he is more comfortable telling me about stuff that he has not shared with staff at the house

The wife of my befriendee has benefitted with having some space/time for herself which she appreciates

In general he's excited about trying new things and throws himself into activities

Volunteers were asked, in their opinion, overall what had been the biggest impact on their befriendee.

I think it was really nice to have someone she could talk to about her mental health because she didn't feel like she could confide in her friends or family

Generally just meeting up and giving him time away from home/school has made a big impact, as well as our relationship as I feel he trusts me

I don't think my match spends much other time socialising and enjoys getting the chance to go out

They have been able to decide, for themselves, the direction they'd like to take in life

Hopefully, that she feels she is recognised as being a competent young lady, her opinions are valid and she is doing great at dealing with tough times

Her new ability and confidence in getting public transport by herself which has increased her independence dramatically

I provided a person, with similar experiences, with whom he could discuss his issues. I was not a figure of authority, nor did I hold a personal relationship, thus I was a unique outlet

j) Best Memory

Volunteers spoke of many great memories of visits with befriendees. For those volunteering with the Adolescent project these were mainly around the realisation of developing trust between them and observing growing confidence in the young people. For volunteers with the Adult project many were about when the befriendee 'opened up' to them, sharing anxieties, experiences and feelings.

Early on she didn't say much when we hung out and I was worried that she wasn't enjoying it at all and I hadn't been doing a good job, but when she went home she hugged me and messaged me later saying that she had had a really great time and was looking forward to next time

My match spent some time explaining things he had learned in higher physics, he really enjoys explaining things. It was good to see him being so passionate about something

During a walk, I was shown a favoured spot where they used to hang out as a younger child. It was a privilege to hear & share those cherished memories

Getting her to eat in Macdonald's. She had been unable to eat in front of people. One day we went in to Macdonald's, ordered food and stayed in to eat it. She was really pleased and proud to have managed it

The first time we bonded. We were out for a walk; I made him walk up a hill despite his complaints. When he got to the top and looked around he was so happy and proud of himself

Having coffee with my first match when she talked for the first time very openly about her life and experiences and the difficulties she was experiencing. It was good as up until then she hadn't trusted me enough or known me well enough to be able to talk so openly

k) Social Events

LINK provides a range of social events for befriendedees and befrienders. Volunteers were asked their views on these.

All respondents agreed that they enjoyed these events. 74% (n 17) strongly agreed, 26% (n 6) agreed.

They are great. Our favourite is the barbecue

Also all respondents agreed that these events were useful to them. 50% (n 13) strongly agreed, 50% agreed.

Over and above being fun, it was very good for me and especially for my befriendedee to engage with others and share experiences.

Useful to meet and talk to other befrienders



l) Any other service?

Finally volunteers were asked if there were any other services or events they would like to see LINK provide.

Peer support groups

More befriending is needed. Locum volunteers would be useful to fill in when needed

m) Any other Comments

Responses to the request for any other comments were overwhelmingly positive.

LINK makes such a difference to young people with mental health problems, volunteering for this organisation is both a privilege and pleasure. Seeing my young person come on leaps and bounds has filled me with confidence in myself and the skills LINK has provided me with, but also makes me ecstatic to see my young person achieving their potential

It's given me a new lease of life

I have had a very positive and rewarding time volunteering with LINK and it is an organisation I have mentioned to others (both as volunteers and as an organisation that may be of use to them) as it is a very professionally run charity and a very worthwhile one

As a clinical psychologist working with young people with mental health problems in another area now I wish I had a service like link available to help support the young people I work with. LINK provides support and social opportunities to isolated young people in a natural and positive way and provides opportunities for recovery not available through traditional mental health services

I really appreciate LINK. It really helped me when I needed it and I'm glad to give back. I'm glad that people are out there doing this

The service can't be accurately measured through numbers and feedback, the impact goes far wider than these can ever evidence. It has the ability to truly change lives, both for the befriender and Volunteer. It benefits the wider community as a whole

Befriending is important – powerful. LINK is a totally approachable organisation, professional in its approach

Volunteer Celebration Lunch



5. Results - Befriendees

a) Introduction

22 befriendees responded to the online survey, 9 from the Adult project and 13 from the Adolescent project. Of the 22 respondents 5 only partially completed the survey. A further 9 were interviewed either face to face or by telephone, 6 from the Adult project and 3 from the Adolescent project.

The majority of those responding from the Adolescent project (n 11) had been involved for two years or more, while the majority (n 10) of those responding from the Adult project had been involved for two years or more. 5 from each project were relatively new to LINK and had been involved for less than one year. One individual from each project had been involved for over 5 years.

Most of the befriendees met once a fortnight (18). 6 stated that they met once a week and 7, once a month.

b) Typical Activities

Befriendees were asked what they did with their befriendee on an average meeting.

Befriendees for both the Adolescent and the Adult projects reported a wide range of activities including meeting for coffee or a meal, visiting museums and other visitor attractions, shopping, cinema and theatre trips, different forms of exercise activities or going for a walk.

Going shopping, days out to Edinburgh, meals out, the cinema

Swimming, skating, Go karting, McDonald's, walks and plenty of chats

We went for dinners or to the cinema, I didn't feel comfortable in public places and this encouraged me to do things that I wouldn't normally have done

Things I don't usually do. If I don't have to go out I won't

Activities varied for adults and for young people with a focus on physical activities and cinema trips for many young people while adults described shopping trips, going out for meals or coffee and going to museums and other visitor attractions.



c) Expectations

When asked what they had hoped for when meeting their befrienders LINK Adolescent Project befriendees mostly expressed an interest in getting out and about and having someone to talk to other than family or staff.

To get out of the house for a little bit and to work on my confidence

Someone to talk to and someone to listen to me and not judge

The ability to be out and learn to be more comfortable in public places

A chance to do normal things like go out to lunch with someone who wasn't a family member (was unable to do so as I suffered from severe anxiety)

Get out and about, try new things. That's easier with someone to support you

Adult project befriendees also expressed an interest in getting out and about; support to allow them to leave the house and someone to talk to.

A way to get out and have someone to talk to and help me to try and enjoy life

A new friend, trips out, to get more confident. To give me support to make changes in my life

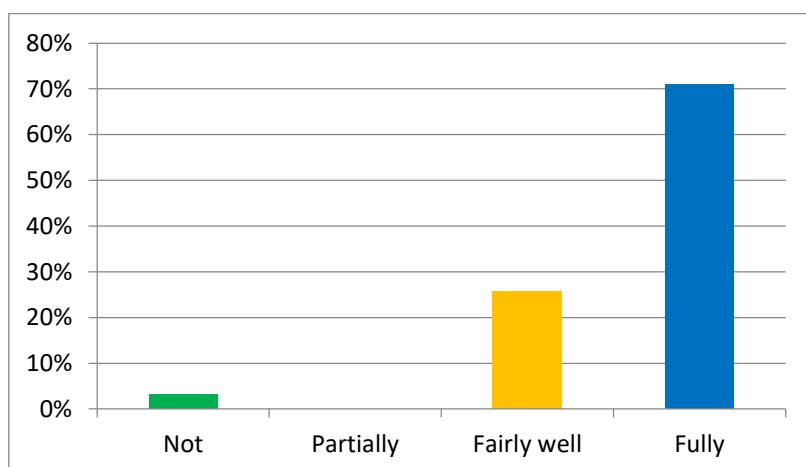
Someone to talk to, a friend to help me get out of the house more. Someone understanding of my mental health

To be able to leave my house now and then

Have a 'listening ear' someone who is not too involved – not burden family

The majority of befriendees felt that their expectations had been fairly well (n 8) or fully (n 22) met. One befriendee felt that their expectations had not been met. For this question and all following requests to rate statements one respondent, who answered the online survey, disagreed or strongly disagreed to all.

To what extent have your expectations been met?



My befriendee has helped me so much. I am now a lot more comfortable to go out, able to do things now that I couldn't before

We have the same interests and get on well

My befriendee is 'on my wavelength' without a doubt. She turned out to be even better than I hope.

My expectations have been fully met and beyond

d) Initial and ongoing Contact

Befriendees were asked about their experience of the process of contacting LINK and registering to be matched. When asked if they agreed that the process was handled well the majority agreed or strongly agreed. One person strongly disagreed

Strongly agree – 71% (n 22)

Agree – 26% (n 8)

Strongly Disagree – 3% (n 1)

Befriendees were asked if they agreed that ongoing contact with LINK staff was at the right level for them. The majority (n 27) agreed or strongly agreed, 3 people disagreed.

Strongly agree – 63% (n 19)

Agree – 27% (n 8)

Disagree – 10% (n 3)

e) Match

Befriendees were asked if they agreed that the match they had been offered was a good one for them. The majority strongly agreed (n 23) or agreed (n 6); 2 people disagreed.

We just hit it off

I get on really well with him

As soon as I met my befriendee we just clicked. I felt I had known her forever

Matching process was carefully and sensitively handled

We have so much in common

Very easy. I met my befriendeer with my CPN to ease the process and all decisions as to whether I wanted to continue meeting with her were all my own

Befriendeer is just brilliant! Kind, considerate, easy to talk to, non-judgemental and always kept me informed. She also provided a good structure which I desperately needed

The first match offered was not suitable, but there was no problem finding someone else. I particularly wanted to be befriended by someone nearer my own age

f) Impact of befriending

Befriendees were asked their views of the impact of befriending on themselves.

As a result of meeting my befriendeer I have Increased Confidence

Strongly agree – 53% (n 9)

Agree – 41% (n 7)

Disagree – 6% (n 1)

When I was in high school I attended no classes and barely managed to stay in a classroom with the support for learning department. I am now in my 4th year of University and am doing well and have one of the best attendance records in my class

I am now happy to do more things on my own. I became a school Prefect this year which I would not have put myself forward for. I have more confidence to speak to people and feel I have something to contribute which is because my befriendeer listens to me and that has given me confidence

For the first time in my life I engaged in 'normal' activities with my befriendeer. I continue to do so and it no longer feels alien or daunting

I feel more able to take part in activities knowing my befriendeer will be there to support me

As a result of meeting my befriendeer I have Increased Self-Esteem

Strongly agree – 59% (n 16)

Agree – 33% (n 9)

Disagree – 7% (n 2)

I'm more outgoing now. Before we moved to Scotland I had lots of friends but once we moved I became more isolated. Going out with my befriendeer has made a real difference

My befriendeer listens, emphasises that I am important and that it is ok to say no sometimes

As a result of meeting my befriendeer I feel More Positive

Strongly agree – 39% (n 7)

Agree – 50% (n 9)

Disagree – 11% (n 2)

Sometimes if things are going badly or I am struggling with a situation or problem, talking thing through or even just having coffee and a chat can make a difference

I now know that everyone is different, and that is not necessarily a negative thing

Before I met (my befriendeer) I didn't want to be here. That's changed now

I feel more positive about the future. My befriendeer has helped me to identify what I want and to seek support to put that forward

My befriendeer had previously done the college course I had started. I was worried about the course and he was able to reassure me that it was not as scary as I thought

As a result of meeting my befriendeer I feel More Relaxed and Confident about speaking to people

Strongly agree – 23% (n 8)

Agree – 66% (n 23)

Disagree – 11% (n 4)

I am more confident about speaking with people who are older than me for example teachers and I am more confident about telling teachers what I need or asking for help at school

The most improvement has been in 'normal' social settings. After being befriended I felt that I could cope with these better and enjoyed them

I used to be able to talk to people but when I became unwell I didn't feel able to do this. Now, having spent time with my befriendeer I feel I am back to how I used to be

As a result of meeting my befriendeer I have more people and activities in my life

Strongly agree – 42% (n 8)

Agree – 37% (n 7)

Disagree – 21% (n 4)

I made more of an effort to try new things and go different places rather than isolate myself

I have volunteered in a garden and work with other volunteers in the summer and other holidays. I also helped some elderly people in our village with gardening and helped clear guttering etc. I also help fellow classmates in my accounts and administration classes when the struggle with understanding as I am reasonably good at these subjects. I would not have done any of this before

I have too many social engagements now! Not complaining

As a result of meeting my befriender I feel More Motivated

Strongly agree – 28% (n 5)

Agree – 56% (n 10)

Disagree – 17% (n 3)

Much more motivated have been to gym and swimming by myself will now go to hairdressers etc alone

Being a part of LINK encouraged me to attend college and then university as I realised that I have something to offer the world

Definitely, I now volunteer with people who self harm

I now feel more able to face my fears and try different things

I have someone to go to the gym with, it's harder to do this on my own

Befriendees were asked what they felt was the biggest impact for them of having a befriender.

Getting out and about and having someone to share things with

Getting out on my own without my husband. It gives him space and it's good for us. We now have different things to talk about when I get home

My outlook on life has dramatically improved. My mental health peaks and troughs have evened out. I feel more secure

My befriender has made me see I am not worthless, that I am worth something and not just a people pleaser

Before meeting my befriender I did not go out at all. Now she has helped me increase my confidence to get the bus, to meet up and to get out and about

It has made me more confident. I feel able to tell people how I feel

Realising that there is something better beyond your current darkness and something as simple as a shared cup of tea can bring in so much light

They were asked to describe how they felt life would be different for them without the befriending support from LINK.

I'd be very isolated, totally withdrawn from society

I would still be facing anxieties that I now feel I can deal with

Life would have been less, less of everything. Some of my first experiences were with my befriendee, such as going bowling or a bbq. Sounds simple but the skills of socialising in those situations are invaluable. Chances are, I also wouldn't be volunteering today if it wasn't for LINK. It inspires me to be more

Would just stay in my house at weekends

I think LINK has been part of a bigger process for me but an important part. I think I will always struggle with social isolation at times in my life because of my Aspergers but when I started with LINK I was really struggling. Befriending was a piece of the jigsaw that has helped put me back together although still a bit loose on occasion I am a lot better than I was

Would pretty much have never left the house without my parents. Would have been extremely nervous doing everyday activities such as shopping

I would have continued to have stayed at home with my son and wouldn't have felt comfortable leaving the house without my partner being with me. It's showed me the importance of having my own life and that friendships can make a difference in a life when it feels so very bleak

g) Best Memory

When asked about their best memory of a time with their befriendee respondents spoke about laughter, about new experiences and about spending time with a friend.

I went with my befriendee to a factory shop in Cupar. It was a really tight space and we both kept knocking things over and then hurrying to pick them up. We had a great laugh in the shop and afterwards on the way home talking about it

Happy time laughing together

Sitting in the sun in the botanical gardens having coffee and cake then seeing the butterfly farm. Was a great day

h) Social Events

Befriendees were asked their views on the LINK social events.

Most respondents agreed that they enjoyed these events. 57% (n 12) strongly agreed, 38% (n 8) agreed, 5% (n 1) disagreed. Many respondents mentioned the Christmas meal which is a firm favourite with many befriendees.



Comments describing the outstanding features of the social events were positive.

Everyone was treated equal and had a lot of fun

Have met lots of other people through these events

They are fun and include people – you don't feel left out

Also most respondents agreed that these events were useful to them. 48% (n 10) strongly agreed, 43% (n 9) agreed, 10% (n 2) disagreed.

The concept of 'normal' socialising was important to me, something away from the usual madness. These events allowed me to put new skills into practice

They allowed me the opportunity to socialise with other young people in the same position

Get out, meet people, socialise, become less introverted

Helps me see I'm not the only one with mental health problems, it comes in all different shapes and sizes

They give me something to do and the opportunity to meet others

Helps to reduce anxiety about being in large groups of people

i) Any other service?

Finally befriendees were asked if there were any other services or events they would like to see LINK provide. There were only a few answers to this question as respondents on the whole felt happy with what was offered. The main comment was a request for increased provision.

Peer support

Just hope befriending is open to lots of people that are perhaps feeling isolated or lonely

More regular/frequent social events

j) Any other Comments

Responses to the request for any other comments were overwhelmingly positive. Befriendees stressed the importance of the service in their lives and the difference it has made for them.

Great organisation that aims to improve the life of young people. It improved my life and I'm so grateful to have been given the chance

I am very thankful that I received this service as I don't really have friends

LINK helped me get my life back on track and I am forever grateful

Just that it really can provide you the confidence to actually get out and start enjoying life than being scared of it

Fantastic service- thanks for your support you changed my life!

I think that the staff do a wonderful job as do the volunteers, and hope that this service can continue, not just for myself but for others who require it

Invaluable service!

It is a valuable service to have out there otherwise people would be very isolated

It's been a really good thing meeting my befriendeer. She treats me like a friend

They provide a great service. It's so easy to get involved, I'm glad I'm a part of it

They provide an amazing service. Also if they know of other organisations that may help you they give you that information

LINK have been really helpful to me. I feel I have made friends

How well they handle helping someone with anxiety, matching them with the befriendeer and changing someone's life

6. Results – Referrers

a) Introduction

Responses were received from representatives from 9 referral agencies, 3 in relation to the Adult project and 6 relating to the Adolescent project. Respondents represented a broad range of roles in health and social care and included CPNs, Occupational Therapist, Residential Child Care and Social Work services.

Some respondents had referred many individuals to LINK over time, one had referred 10 clients, and two had referred up to 6 clients. The remaining respondents had all referred one client.

b) LINK's Provision

Referrers described what they felt LINK provided for their clients that was not available through other support services. The main themes were opportunities for socialising and relationships that were outwith family or care settings.

A very individualised service, providing a positive role model, outwith the staff team where young person resides

A person outwith their family who they can talk to and do things outside the family home, when this can sometimes be difficult. Also provides an older role model and friend to help build confidence

Befriending and support to people particularly in the East Neuk of Fife - as a Fife wide service we find it very difficult to find other agencies who work in this area of Fife

It is invaluable to those who were involved. Allowed them to have 'practice friendships' another person, not staff, to interact with

Emotional Wellbeing

Befriending helps people with severe and enduring mental health problems to get out and about. Senga is excellent at matching befriendee and befriendee

c) Project processes, recruitment, referral and communication

Referrers gave views about their experiences with LINK. They were asked to rate the following statements from Strongly Agreed to Strongly Disagreed. For all questions the responses were Agreed or Strongly Agreed

Link was an easy project to find out about and get accurate information about

Strongly agree – 67% (n 6)

Agree – 33% (n 3)

LINK is well known and has a very good reputation

I have found LINK staff to work in a professional manner

Strongly agree – 67% (n 6)

Agree – 33% (n 3)

Very much so

Feedback I have given about my client has been received and dealt with professionally.

Jane is a very approachable person and she is understanding of the difficulties that our young person has in interacting with people/ within groups - supporting his involvement

I am confident that LINK's procedures in recruiting and selecting volunteers are of a high quality

Strongly agree – 67% (n 6)

Agree – 33% (n 3)

This is evidenced in the volunteers that worked with 2 young people

They screen and train them fully

I have found the process of referring people to LINK to be straightforward

Strongly agree – 67% (n 6)

Agree – 33% (n 3)

Referral form was basic. Easy to use

We have been very fortunate with the referrals we have made; it has been straightforward and quick

The process of matching is inclusive, involving the patient

I have found ongoing contact with LINK once clients are matched to be satisfactory

Strongly agree – 67% (n 6)

Agree – 33% (n 3)

Jane and I / the team, have very good communication

We have contact with LINK and with befriendee when needed

d) Impact of Befriending

Referrers were asked their views on the impact of befriending on their clients/patients. Once again they were asked to rate the following list from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

As a result of befriending the people I have referred have increased in confidence

Strongly agree – 63% (n 5)

Agree – 38% (n 3)

It has really helped the client to get out independently with someone other than a family member

One person I had referred never left the house. After working with LINK befriender he began getting out and about by himself even on public transport

Quite a difference – one young man now goes out to the gym with and without his befriender

As a result of befriending the people I have referred have increased in self esteem

Strongly agree – 50% (n 4)

Agree – 50% (n 4)

Young person is enjoying his time with his befriender, he has their activities together to look forward to and the positive relationship has been beneficial to his self esteem

As a result of befriending the people I have referred have been better able to cope emotionally

Strongly agree – 50% (n 4)

Agree – 50% (n 4)

Young person is learning to deal with the views of others being different to his own.

My patient has someone else to talk to about worries and concerns

As a result of befriending the people I have referred have improved communication skills

Strongly agree – 50% (n 4)

Agree – 50% (n 4)

Being able to talk to others, e.g. in shops to pay or ask for items that he wants

Because of practice they are better able to deal with appropriate communication

As a result of befriending the people I have referred have become less socially isolated

Strongly agree –63% (n 5)

Agree – 25% (n 2)

Disagree – 13% (n 1)

Absolutely – one person is now going out on his own and can travel on his own

It has given the young person the opportunity to go out without staff

People go on outings arranged by LINK and make friends

Young person previously had a group of peers that he saw in the community, however now the relationships have come to an end. His befriendeer is now the only person he sees socially - other than input from the staff team

As a result of befriending the people I have referred have become more motivated

Strongly agree –25% (n 2)

Agree – 75% (n 6)

Young person is now able to make plans with his befriendeer. This was work that we, as a team wanted to see him progress in, ie being involved in the relationship with the befriendeer and it not being " all one sided" This has been very successful, as the befriendeer has understood why this is important for the young person and the reasoning behind our request

Someone who would not leave the house now goes out by himself on public transport

Respondents described the following additional changes they had observed in those they referred as a result of befriending:

Self worth and motivation increased from befriending contact

Able to go out with someone other than a family member

Young person has something to look forward to now

Feeling less isolated, which helps towards their mental health

Coming out of their shell, they communicate more, look forward to things more and make friends

A general change in mental health, more confident and willing to get involved

One person managed to go on to make friends in the community. LINK was part of that

They also described what they felt had been the biggest impact of befriending on the people they had referred.

Socialising with a different person outside of his immediate family and health professionals

Enjoyment, fun, an activity to look forward to. A positive relationship with a kind, nice, understanding male

Confidence in getting out and about

Great events organised, improved quality of life, confidence that they would not have had

Person really enjoyed having someone to take them out as a friend – they previously did not have friends

Improved quality of life. Confidence that they wouldn't have had otherwise

Eradication of social isolation

Respondents shared the following positive stories relating to LINK and their clients:

My client is now interacting with someone of his own age and I hope that moving forward with befriending journey this will provide him with skills and confidence to continue this within his own community

Allows client to contact with someone outside of the family and who is closer to her own age and shares similar interests

Befriender gives young person lots of opportunities for enjoyable, learning experiences, e.g. snowboarding, lighting fires & toasting marshmallows, cinema trips, shared interesting discussions

Providing a befriender to a very isolated individual who struggled making friendships, gave them a great opportunity to talk to someone and do things out with the family. There was a clear improvement in their self-esteem and mental health as a result

Having been supported to do and practice activities he has moved on and now has friends in the community and a girlfriend. LINK played a part in that

e) Future needs

Referral agencies agreed (2) or strongly agreed (6) that they expected there to be an ongoing need for their clients for the befriending which LINK provides.

Many young people in care benefit from the relationship with a befriender

Mental health problems can result in people being lonely. The service that LINK provides can really help

I already have another client to refer to LINK

Respondents strongly agreed (7) or agreed (1) that LINK provides an important element of community based support for people with mental health problems.

Support of this type, in the community, is extremely important

Community integration – helps to meet other young people in a similar situation

Because of the rural location there are very limited services

All referral agencies agreed (1) or strongly agreed (7) that LINK's work fits with local authority and national policy for people with mental health problems.

It helps to ensure inclusion

It is adaptable – person centred

Referral agencies commented on the likely impact if LINK's befriending services were to be removed. All believe that if LINK were not able to continue providing the service it would create real difficulties for their clients resulting in increased levels of isolation and deterioration in mental health.

They could not access any social environments in a community which is already difficult to access for people with Learning Disabilities due to the location and lack of community activities/groups

Increased isolation

Young person would greatly miss the input from the befriendee

It would leave a gap where young people who are feeling isolated and struggling with making friends and getting out would continue down this spiral

No local support in their own community

It would be detrimental. There would be no opportunities to go out with an external person and talk things through with someone who is not staff

Quite devastating if they didn't have the service. It would have a negative impact on patients' mental health which would then have an impact on all other services

f) Further services

All responses to the question on what further services would they like to see LINK provide were either increased capacity or expanding into group befriending.

If LINK could provide groups in the local communities to provide a befriending service on a wider scale this would be amazing!

More group meet ups to increase confidence, relationships with other young people and other adults too

Possibly some group befriending

More group events that could include people still waiting for a befriender match.

Increase in the number of befrienders. If possible increased capacity to work with people who have a learning disability in addition to mental health

Just to have more – sometimes the wait for a befriender can be a bit long

More befrienders

g) Any other comments?

Finally referrers were asked if they had any other comments about befriending at LINK. All comments were positive demonstrating how valued LINK's befriending is.

Excellent service

LINK is an extremely good service

Fantastic organisation that I hope continues to grow and support people in the local community

A valuable service in an area with few resources and poor public transport links

I am grateful that I found them and can refer people to them. I wish there was more

It has been a really good service for young people. I hope to continue to work with Jane for many years to come

Fantastic service for people with mental health problems and are so isolated. It provides a positive impact on patients that I could not provide and helped in their recovery

7. Conclusions

It is clear, from responses from volunteers, befriendees and referral agencies, that the services provided by LINK are popular and highly regarded. All groups have reported positively on their experiences with LINK and on the impact it has had for befriendees and for volunteers. The main suggestions for any changes or developments to the service were to increase provision, some suggested group befriending as a means to increase availability.

LINK volunteers found out about the project through a range of sources, from advertisements in local press or on social media, through the local Volunteer Centre, from their GP surgery and from information stalls at university and college events. Some, who had benefited from having a LINK befriendeer themselves in the past, have now been supported to become volunteers.

All volunteers found the initial training offered was beneficial in preparing them for the role. They also felt the ongoing opportunities for training were helpful. LINK provides information on external training available and this is appreciated by volunteers. The only area mentioned as a gap in training provision was for a specialist topic for a specific befriendee.

All volunteers valued the ongoing support offered and found it to be of a high quality. In addition to the planned, regular support and supervision meetings volunteers were able to access any additional support as and when they needed which they also valued.

LINK volunteers value their role; they recognise personal benefits from that and the interaction with the project and with their befriendee/s. For some it has provided opportunities in relation to education or employment while some recognise the impact for their own self-esteem and wellbeing. They can see the impact of their involvement with befriendees, observing the development of trust and confidence, seeing the befriendee becoming less isolated, more willing and able to take part in social events and face situations which formerly they found difficult.

LINK is providing a valuable service which complements the work of health and social care professionals. Referral agencies working with people with mental health problems clearly value the service and the opportunities provided. They recognise the importance of LINK's role in providing opportunities for reducing isolation for their clients.

Referral agencies reported examples of people growing in confidence, self-esteem and motivation, improved communication and reduced levels of social isolation. The community inclusion element of LINK befriending is particularly valued. They report on a clearly identified need, for their clients, of the support that is provided by LINK recognising the distinct nature of that support.

Referral agencies expect there to be an ongoing, and possibly increasing, need for the services which LINK provides. They believe that if the service were to reduce or go altogether it would have a truly detrimental impact on their clients/patients leading to reduction in community involvement, increased social isolation and to deterioration in

mental health. It is also recognised that, were the service to reduce or close, that would have a detrimental impact on all other services.

Agencies expressed interest in greater availability of the services provided by LINK. Ideas for future services included increased capacity; befriending for people with learning disabilities; group befriending. The overall theme in all responses was for increased access to befriending for their clients.

For those befriendees taking part in the interviews or survey the overwhelming message was their belief that the service was making/had made significant differences to them and their lives. They appreciated the effort put in by LINK to ensure that the initial contact and subsequent matching processes were as straightforward and streamlined as possible. The success of the majority of the matches is testament to the work of LINK staff when first assessing potential befriendees and volunteers.

Befriendees had differing hopes when first meeting their befriendeer however the main theme expressed was an interest in getting out and about and interest in having someone to talk to. These hopes were met and, in some cases, surpassed. Many respondents reported increased level of community engagement, new activities, and new friends. Befriendees reported on evidence of increased levels of confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

For the young people involved in the Adolescent project, befriending provides a role model with whom they can identify, someone who is closer to them in age and, in some cases, who had had similar experiences to their own. Having someone to relate to, not involved in their care or treatment, with whom they can share worries and anxieties is beneficial and can make a significant difference to their lives as they mature and move forward.

For individuals involved in the Adult project, befriending provided friendly support, a listening ear, acknowledgement and acceptance of who they are, making them feel valued. As a result respondents feel they are more able to value themselves.

For many respondents the changes they have observed in their own lives as a result of having a befriendeer have been significant. For some the differences extend to include family. One example was, from the Adult project, for a woman who reported, now that she can get out and about without her husband 'It gives him space and it's good for us. We now have different things to talk about when we get home.' And from the Adolescent project from a teenager who is a young mum who reported increased confidence in going out with her small son '...as a teen mum I was so uncomfortable in that kind of environment (restaurant) and she showed me that it doesn't matter if he has tantrums or anything I can still keep it together in public and that is something I wouldn't have been able to do now if I hadn't gone that day.'

In addition to the 1-1 befriending, befriendees also greatly value the group social opportunities provided by LINK. In response to the question on what other services they would like LINK to provide, befriendees' answers mirrored those of the volunteers and referral agencies, more befrienders and group befriending.

Befriendees described how they felt their lives would be without LINK befriending. They paint a picture of increased isolation, poorer mental health ‘...life would have been less, less of everything.’

LINK provides important, valued and well run befriending for adolescents and adults with mental health problems. They have committed, well trained and well supported volunteers who recognise the impact of what they do not only on the befriendees but also on their own lives. Referral agencies greatly appreciate what is provided by LINK which they do not, and cannot, provide for their clients/patients.

Befriendees find the services invaluable. This can be summed up in the quote from one respondent which has been used as the title to this document

“Thank you for helping to save my life. Thank you for caring enough to bother.”

8. Recommendations

There are a few recommendations raised throughout this evaluation for LINK to consider for future development. This with the proviso that these will require increased financial and staff resources to create.

- Consider potential to allow for increased numbers of volunteers to be recruited, trained and supported.
- Consider the establishment of group befriending which those waiting for a match could attend.
- Consider increasing numbers of social groups and activities
- Consider possibility of increasing numbers of former befriendees being supported to become befriender
- Consider tapping into specialist training for some.

Appendix 1

LINK EAST FIFE EVALUATION SURVEY QUESTIONS – BEFRIENDERS

1. Please tell us which LINK project you volunteer / have volunteered for? w
 - LINK - Adolescent Befriending Project, LINK - East Fife Mental Health Adult Befriending Project

2. How long have you been / were you involved at LINK?
 - Less than 1 year, 2-3 years, 4-5 years, More than 5 years

3. How many people have you been matched with in your time volunteering at LINK?
 - 1, 2, , 3, Comment

4. How often do you / did you volunteer?
 - Every week, Every 2 weeks, Every month, Other (please specify)

5. What are the typical activities you do/did with the person/people you have been matched with?

Getting Involved at LINK

These questions cover the time when you got involved at LINK and prepared to be a befriender

6. How did you find out about LINK?

7. What particularly attracted you to LINK (as opposed to other volunteering opportunities)?
 - The chance to work with young people, Because it was 1:1, Because it was linked to mental health, Because of the frequency I would have to volunteer, Because of information I had heard about the project, Because of information I had read about the project, Other (please specify)

8. Before volunteering at LINK, how would you describe your level of understanding of the issues faced by people with mental health problems?
 - No understanding, A little understanding, A reasonable level of understanding, A high level of understanding, Comment

9. To what degree has volunteering at LINK had an impact on your attitudes towards people with mental health problems?
 - No impact, A little impact, A reasonable level of impact, A large impact, Comment

10. The process of contacting LINK and registering my interest in becoming a volunteer was handled well

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

11. The training I received at LINK prepared me well for my volunteer role

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

12. The support and supervision I receive at LINK is at the right level for my volunteer role

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

13. What other training (if any) do you think would have helped / would help prepare you for your role as a befriender?

14. What other support (if any) do you feel you need now you are matched / or during the period you were matched?

15. What ongoing training (if any) would you like LINK to provide now that you are a volunteer?

16. What impact (if any) has volunteering at LINK had on you personally?

The Impact of Befriending

These questions cover the impact of befriending on the person you have been matched with.

17. As a result of befriending, the person I am/was matched with has INCREASED IN CONFIDENCE

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose agree, or strongly agree, please give an example of how their confidence improved (options for up to 3 clients)

18. As a result of befriending, the person I meet/met with has INCREASED IN SELF-ESTEEM

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose agree, or strongly agree, please give an example of how their self-esteem improved (options for up to 3 clients)

19. As a result of befriending, the person I meet/met with HAS BEEN BETTER ABLE TO COPE EMOTIONALLY

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose agree, or strongly agree, please give an example of this(options for up to 3 clients)

20. As a result of befriending, the person I meet/met with has IMPROVED IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose agree, or strongly agree, please give an example of how their communication skills improved (options for up to 3 clients)

21. As a result of befriending, the person I meet/met with has BECOME LESS SOCIALLY ISOLATED

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose agree, or strongly agree, please give an example of how their social isolation has decreased (options for up to 3 clients)

22. As a result of befriending, the person I meet/met with has BECOME MORE MOTIVATED

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose agree, or strongly agree, please give an example of their improved motivation (options for up to 3 clients)

23. Are there any other areas of change in the person / people who you were matched with, as a result of befriending?

24. What do you think has been the biggest impact of your involvement on the person / people you have been matched with?

25. What is your best memory of a time with the person / people you have been matched with and why?

And finally...

Thanks so much for giving us your helpful feedback

26. The social events organised by LINK are enjoyable for me

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

27. The social events organised by LINK are useful to me

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

28. Is there any other service/event which you would like to see LINK provide?

29. What other comments would you like to make about befriending at LINK?

Appendix 2

LINK EAST FIFE EVALUATION SURVEY QUESTIONS – BEFRIENDERS

1. Please tell us which LINK project you have been involved with?
 - LINK Adolescent Befriending Project, LINK East Fife Mental Health Adult Befriending Project
2. How long have you been / were you involved at LINK?
 - Less than 1 year, 2-3 years, 4-5 years, More than 5 years
3. How often do you / did you meet your volunteer?
 - Every week, Every 2 weeks, Every month, Other (please specify)
4. What are the typical activities you do/did with the volunteer you are/were matched with?

Getting Involved at LINK

These questions cover the time you first got involved at LINK and the process of being matched.

5. What particularly attracted you to LINK as a form of support?
 - Because it was 1:1, Because it was a project which supported people's mental wellbeing, Because of information I had heard about the project, Because of information I had read about the project, Other (please specify)
6. When you first made contact with LINK, what were you hoping to get out of it?
7. To what extent have your expectations been met?
 - Not met at all, Partially met, Fairly well met, Fully met, Comment
8. The process of contacting LINK and registering to be matched was handled well
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment
9. The match I was offered was a good one for me
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment
10. The ongoing contact with LINK staff is / was at the right level for me
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment
11. Is there any change which you would make to the way LINK organise the support they offer?

Impact of Befriending

These questions cover areas where befriending might have impacted on your life.

12. As a result of meeting with a LINK volunteer, my confidence has increased

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose Agree or Strongly agree, please give an example of how your confidence has improved

13. As a result of meeting with a LINK volunteer, my self-esteem has increased

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose Agree or Strongly agree, please give an example of how your self-esteem has improved

14. As a result of meeting with a LINK volunteer, I have been feeling more positive about things

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose Agree or Strongly agree, please give an example of this

15. As a result of meeting with a LINK volunteer, I feel more relaxed and confident at talking to and getting and keeping touch with people

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose Agree or Strongly agree, please give an example of this

16. As a result of meeting with a LINK volunteer, I have more people and activities in my life

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose Agree or Strongly agree, please give an example of this

17. As a result of meeting with a LINK volunteer, I have become more motivated to do things

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, If you chose Agree or Strongly agree, please give an example of this

18. What do you think has been the biggest impact on you as a result of meeting with a LINK volunteer?

19. Can you describe how life would have been different without the support you've had from LINK?

20. What is your best memory of a time with the volunteer you are/were matched with and why?

21. The social events organised by LINK are enjoyable to me

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

22. The social events organised by LINK are useful to me

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

A couple of questions to close...thanks so much for helping with your feedback

23. Is there any other service/event which you would like to see LINK provide?

24. Are there any other comments you would like to make about LINK?

Appendix 3

LINK EAST FIFE EVALUATION SURVEY QUESTIONS – REFERRERS

1. Which LINK project you have referred to?

- LINK - Adolescent Befriending Project, LINK - East Fife Mental Health Adult Befriending Project

2. Please can you tell us your job title (this will not be matched to your answers, which will remain anonymous)

3. How many people have you referred to LINK in total?

1-3

4-6

7-9

10 and over

Getting Involved at LINK

These questions cover the process of referring people to LINK.

4. What does LINK provide for your clients which is not available through other support services?

5. LINK was an easy project to find out about and get accurate information about

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

6. I have found LINK staff to work in a professional manner

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

7. I am confident that LINK's procedures in recruiting and selecting volunteers are of a high quality

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

8. I have found the process of referring people to LINK to be straightforward

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

9. I have found ongoing contact and communication with LINK once clients are matched, to be satisfactory

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

The Impact of Befriending

These questions cover the impact of befriending on the people you have referred.

10. As a result of befriending, the people I have referred have increased in confidence

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

11. As a result of befriending, the people I have referred have increased in self-esteem

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

12. As a result of befriending, the people I have referred have been better able to cope emotionally

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

13. As a result of befriending, the people I have referred have improved in communication skills

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

14. As a result of befriending, the people I have referred have become less socially isolated

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Other (please specify)

15. As a result of befriending, the people I have referred have become more motivated

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

16. Are there any other areas of change in the people you have referred, as a result of befriending?

17. What do you think has been the biggest impact of befriending on the people you have referred?

18. Please give a positive story/experience relating to LINK and your clients?

Future Needs

These final questions are about the potential future use of LINK by your clients.

19. I expect there to be an ongoing need from my clients for the befriending which LINK provides

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

20. LINK provides an important element of community-based support for people with mental health problems

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

21. LINK's work fits with local authority and national policy for people with mental health problems

- Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Comment

22. What would the removal of LINK befriending mean for your clients?

23. What further services or developments would you like to see LINK provide?

24. What other comments would you like to make about befriending at LINK?

