

**LINK**

**Fife Mental Health Adult Befriending Project**  
Scottish Charity No. SC027493

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2022-23**



## INTRODUCTION

LINK provides a befriending service for people who are isolated due to ongoing mental health difficulties. The Project recruits, trains, supports appropriate volunteers, and matches them with people referred to our organisation by a recognised key worker. A befriender provides company, support and encouragement to service users who want to participate in social, leisure and recreational activities, or in the life of their communities, but need additional support to achieve this.

LINK began delivering a service in September 1997, the Adolescent Project was established in 2003, an adult service in the Levenmouth area began in 2018 and another for adolescents in Glenrothes in 2019. A Kirkcaldy project has just begun for adolescents this year. The Project is a member of Befriending Networks, is recognised as a Volunteer Friendly organisation by Fife Voluntary Action and works within their good practice guidelines. LINK is also a Scottish Living Wage Accredited employer.

At present, we employ and are funded for a Project Manager in East Fife for 27 hours per week to support and train twenty volunteers, many of whom have had mental health problems themselves and for a Project Coordinator for Levenmouth for 16 hours per week to support and train a further eight volunteers.

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chair:	Susan Matson – CAMHS Clinical Nurse Specialist
Vice Chair:	Carole Anderson – Volunteer, Diane Hastie – Volunteer (until June 2022)
Secretary:	Dorothy Woolley – Volunteer
Treasurer:	Lisa Hainey – Solicitor
Member:	Liam Hayman– Befriender (until April 2022)
Member:	Becca Hutchison – Volunteer
Member:	Emilia Burghelia - Volunteer
Member:	Gill Lyth - Volunteer (until August 2022)
Member:	Neil Kinmont (from August 2022)
Volunteer Rep:	Justine Retford (November 2022)
Link Worker:	Lee-anne Sloan- Social Work Services, Shelley Crombie (until November 2022)

## **AIM AND PURPOSE OF BEFRIENDING**

The aim of befriending is to enhance the quality of a befriender's life by supporting and promoting their welfare, personal development and capacity for self-determination. LINK does this with both 1:1 befriending and through various social outings and group events throughout the year. All of this offers the befriender an opportunity to form a trusting relationship with their befriender, which may enable him/her to:

- develop a greater degree of self-confidence and emotional growth.
- develop a greater capacity to make use of their own personal resources.
- develop a greater capacity to form and maintain relationships with others.
- attend social and group events with some support.
- form supportive friendships with peers.

The befriending relationship can be purely that; a friendship that allows the befriender to get active socially without any pressure to set goals or targets, or it may take more of a mentoring form as some individuals set themselves goals and work through them with the help of their befriender. LINK uses Individual Recovery Outcomes Counter (IRoc) evaluations that allow individuals to reflect on their recovery and what they would like to work on or achieve; this is reviewed every three to four months. We know that people can and do recover from even the most serious and long-term mental health problems. For some people the recovery process can be long, slow, and at times difficult but the reality is it *can* happen. The unique nature of the recovery process can make it hard to define, but certain things come up frequently, these help us better understand what recovery means. Befriending can help this process.

- Recovery is living a satisfying and fulfilling life; more than the absence of the symptoms of illness. Some people describe themselves as being in recovery while still experiencing symptoms.

## **SO WHAT DO THE PEOPLE INVOLVED THINK ABOUT OUR SERVICE?**

Through regular evaluations with the service users, volunteers and referrers, we get to know what has made a difference and where we might need to make changes. Often it is what people that tell us that makes the biggest impact though; here are some quotes from the voices that matter:

### **Befriendees**

*'She is pretty amazing. When I go out I feel like crap, but it puts me on a high when I've seen her. She's a very good listener and she doesn't judge.'*

*'C helped me to get out of the house in the evenings, to do something productive which improved my mood. C was easy to chat to, I felt relaxed in her company..'*

*'I really value these times, She ('B') is a godsend, just lovely. We have a lot to talk about.'*

*'*

*'It gets me out, I wouldn't be able to do a lot of these things without A.'*

*'It benefits me a lot; gives me confidence, has made me want to get out there and not shut myself away in the house. A is brilliant!'*

### **Befrienders**

*'B has told me on many occasions that he always looks forward to us meeting up. (I like) Feeling my befriendee can talk to me openly and that we enjoy our outings etc and are relaxed in each other's company.'*

*'Sometimes I am the only contact 'C' has in a week.'*

*'D is learning to accept her worth, she's more prepared to speak out.'*

*'She has learnt how to live and be her again, and now has the confidence to go out, access public transport, visit relatives, go shopping. . . she really was housebound before LINK.'*

### **Carers**

*'It was wonderful to see our son develop a relationship and be able to socialise outside of our family group. It was really good for his self-confidence, independence and self-esteem. He looked forward to his visits.'*

*'Thank you for this wonderful service. We really do need it and value it greatly.'*

*'E gave our son a lot of time. We were very grateful for her input.'*

### **Referrers**

*'I have already noticed a huge difference since F has had G. F has benefitted greatly from having a befriender.'*

*Clinical Psychologist*

*H has benefitted greatly from his befriender. They share similar interests enabling him to be less isolated. C can be anxious and shy but is in his element when singing his songs.*

*'I'm a huge fan of your service, you do great work. I know how much I values it.'*  
*Community Mental Health Nurse*

*J is isolated within her community, over the years she has lost touch with a lot of her friends. Having her befriend has changed her life.'*

*'K's life over the past 2 years has improved considerably and having his befriend has contributed to this vastly. He clearly enjoys meeting up and regularly updates me on their activities. Although medication has helped, having his befriend has made a major difference.'*

*'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 helps in their recovery.'*

*CMHN*

## **RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS**

At present we have 18 matches and 19 volunteers and Levenmouth has 3 volunteers 2 matches and 1 match in development, as some volunteers befriend more than one service user. The Project has developed over the years and benefits from a good profile within the community and with other voluntary and statutory organisations. Currently 26% NE Fife and 80% Levenmouth of our volunteers have told us that they have experienced poor mental health themselves at some time in their lives. The Project provides an empowering opportunity for befriendees to become befrienders if they feel they would like to at some point.

We welcome volunteers from all walks of life and are recruited through talks to various groups, recruitment fairs, posters in libraries, churches, cafes, local press, radio, word of mouth and using the local Volunteer Centre and Student Recruitment Services. People are often recommended to us by statutory services as wishing to volunteer to help in their own personal recovery and we recognise the value of people who have used the service and are now in a place to give back. Friends of current volunteers have joined us too; our volunteers are clearly good ambassadors for the service.

Our current volunteers live in St. Andrews, Cupar, Pittenweem, Kirkcaldy, Anstruther, Glenrothes, Dundee, Leven, Lundin Links, Leuchars and surrounding areas, and one volunteer is continuing to support her befrienders by distance methods from Aberdeen. We have a fair few international students volunteering with us this year during their time in Scotland coming from England, Ireland and parts of India and Africa and it's good to exchange experiences of attitudes to mental health and care in different places.

Between them, LINK's Adult Projects need 28 volunteers. We continue to attract and keep our volunteers, some for many years; our current longest serving volunteer has

been with the project from the set up when she took a committee role, she has now volunteered as a befriender for the last 9 years.

Fig 1. and 2. Show age and gender of current volunteers.

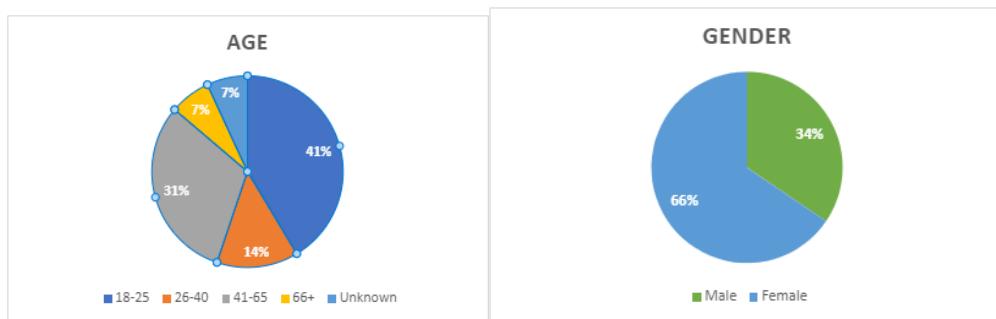


Fig 1.

Fig 2.

## TRAINING

Seven new NEF and two Levenmouth volunteers have been trained this year, three male and four female EF and one female and one male for the Levenmouth Project. Initial volunteer training has been able to take place face to face again which the NE Fife Manager chose to do and the Levenmouth Project Coordinator chose to keep the training online. It is lovely to see people face to face and interacting again but training online can save travel and the difficulties of getting a group together in one place at one time to do training. Training covers the befriending process, stigma, common mental health problems, safeguarding and common scenarios that the befriender might encounter. Volunteer talks have been held too; Linda from The Samaritans joined us for a virtual talk about their service and our second volunteer talk this year was again online and given by Gemma from One Stop Shop for Autism,

## SOCIAL EVENTS AND THE LINK COMMUNITY

In August we held our summer picnic at The Deer Centre which was a lovely day and everyone enjoyed feeding the deer, watching the birds of prey exhibition and socialising with our picnic. In early December we held a creative workshop led by Emilia Burghelia one of our Trustees. This was held at Cupar YMCA and was a fantastic night of mindful creation where participants decorated mandalas and listened to Christmas music while chatting. Cuppas and mince pies were of course also served.



Our Christmas meal was held at The Bank in Anstruther and was as always well attended by service users, volunteers, staff and committee. The food was excellent in a lovely venue with brilliant company.



The walking group has wandered over many locations in East Fife and Levenmouth including a walk over the Tay Bridge, Pittenweem to Anstruther, Cambo Gardens and more. The outings provide the chance for befriendees to take part in a healthy group social event meet other befriendees where Peer Support can occur and befrienders too can meet up.



The Project publish a quarterly newsletter giving information on events and training, information about funding and donations, people's experience of befriending and some light-hearted articles. Befrienders and befriendees are encouraged to contribute and there have been articles contributed by both over the last year.



Happy bunch at the summer outing at the Scottish Deer Centre.

## **VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION**

LINK is registered with the Saltire Awards Scheme, which gives our organisation the chance to reward the hard work put in by our young volunteers (aged 18-25). Certificates are given after 10, 25, 50, 100 and 250 hours of service. Older volunteers are also rewarded with our similar in-house scheme. These certificates are just another little way to say thank you and recognise how much work individuals put into their role. It also provides evidence for the volunteer to take to future employers/educational courses. This year we have had volunteers gain certificates for between 25 and 720 hours.

## **REFERRALS**

Since the very first referrals to the project in August 1997, the NE Fife project has received 372 referrals that fit our criteria and some previous service users rereferrals after a period of time. Many more have been out of our geographical remit or out with the age group specified by the Project. Since getting started the Levenmouth project has received 30 referrals.

Since April 2022 there have been twelve people referred to LINK's Adult Project that meet our project's criteria. Nine of those referrals were female, two were male and one was non-binary. Since April 2022 the Levenmouth Project has received 6 new referrals 5 of which are female and 1 is male.

Referral areas were widespread this year coming from St. Andrews, Cupar, Auchtermuchty, Ladybank, Tayport, Leuchars, Anstruther, Newburgh, Newport and surrounding areas for the East Fife area. For the Levenmouth project referrals came from Leven, Kennoway, Methil, East Wemyss, Windygates and Coaltown of Wemyss.

Current service users for the project are aged between 18 and 65, with the largest group being in the 41-65 age bracket with the larger number of service users being female.

Fig 4. and 5. Shows age and gender of current service users. Fig 6 shows where service users live.

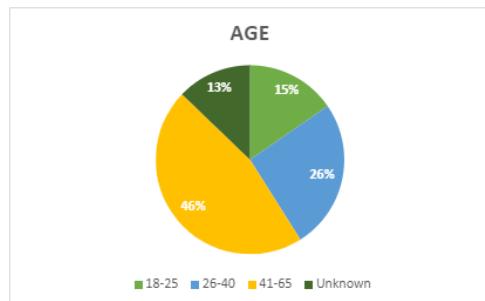


Fig 4.

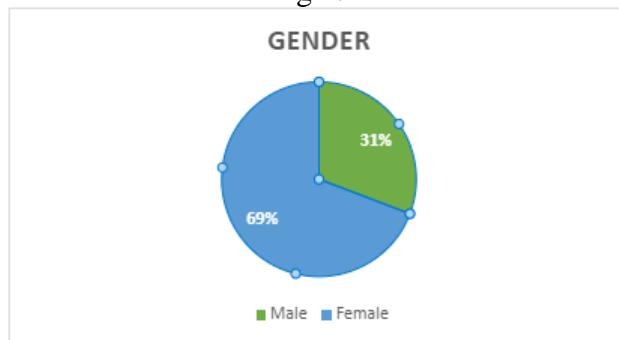


Fig 5.



Fig 6

61% of service users stay within green circle - 15 mile radius  
 39% of those service users stay within blue circle - 5 mile radius

## LINK'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE OTHER SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

LINK works with and refers service users to the North East Fife Community Hub, The Express Group, Men's Shed, Kennoway Community Shed, The Shed at Bayview, Contact Point and SAMH and The Curnie Clubs.

When a service user grows more confident these places are very useful, enabling a volunteer to encourage and support their befriender to socialise and join in the varied activities on offer. Befrienders are encouraged to go along with their befriendees to these services for the first time to see what is on offer. We have close bonds with these groups, which offer an invaluable service to the community and work closely with the group coordinators, sharing resources and knowledge where we can. Sincere thanks to all the groups for making befrienders, befriendees and I so welcome.

## THANK YOUS

The Project could not function adequately without the commitment and support provided from a wide range of individuals and organisations. Thank you again to all of you who have contributed to the running of the Project:

- The organisations that fund us:

The National Lottery Community Fund who funded us with £35221.00

Fife Council Health and Social Care £11,975.12

Mary Moore Trust £7,000

St. Andrews Community Trust £677.00

James Paterson from Dundee University raised £240 walking the Seven Hills of Edinburgh

Kathleen MacKenzie for donating her expenses

Lodge of St. Andrews at Crail for their donation

- The Management Committee for their hard work and ongoing support throughout the year.
- The staff at Fife Voluntary Action (F.V.A.) for their help, advice and access to their training courses for staff and volunteers.
- My wonderful colleagues who have been such a supportive team as always.
- The staff at Befriending Networks for their invaluable support.
- Fife Primary Care Trust represented on the Committee by CAMHs workers Clinical Nurse Specialist Susan Matson and Primary Mental Health Worker, Rebecca Hutchison.
- Fife Council Social Work Service who is represented on the management committee by Lee-Anne Sloan our Link worker.
- NHS Fife for their free Health Improvement training programme
- Linda Leighton for independently examining our accounts and preparing them for OSCR.
- Caroline Rochford for HR Services.
- Dorothy Woolley, my supervisor for her support and guidance throughout the year.
- Maria Suttie, my admin worker for her patience, hard work, organisational and IT skills that have supported me through this year.
- Corne Storm and at The Lottery Community Fund for her valuable support as funding officer.

- Linda from Samaritans and Gemma from the One Stop Shop for Autism for giving up their time to talk to our volunteers and staff about their projects.
- The team at North East Fife Community Hub for being so welcoming and allowing us to use their rooms for training and events.
- As always the biggest thank you is last, because without them the project would be nothing, so a huge thank you to all my wonderful volunteers who make such a difference to so many lives. Thank You!

## **EAST FIFE PROJECT MANAGER'S REPORT**

It has been another busy year for LINK and unbelievably, my twelfth year in post. This year has not been easy as our current funding ends in June and I have spent much of my time securing funding to ensure that the project will continue beyond this. We have had some pots of funding come in and I am hopeful that we will be successful with others in the next few months. Recruiting volunteers has also been more challenging but I ended the year with nineteen matches and two volunteers awaiting a match.

LINK has continued to be funded by Fife Council Health and Social Care Fund, receiving £11,975.12 again this year and the National Lottery Community Fund which gave us £35,221. We also received funding from the Mary Moore Trust of £7000. It has however been a difficult year knowing that our funding from the Lottery ended in June. I have been busy applying to many different funds and trusts for funding for the project for next year and all the staff have met and put in place a fundraising calendar for the year which includes a stall at a craft fair, a social evening and a few of the staff and volunteers are doing the Kiltwalk in August to raise some funds. James Paterson, a student from Dundee University raised £240 for LINK as part of his careers module by walking the Seven Hills of Edinburgh. We have recently received funding from the Community Recovery fund and are hopeful of being successful in some of the other bids.

The walking group has resumed and get out monthly; we have managed some lovely walks in Anstruther, across the Tay Bridge, and at Cambo to name but a few. It is good to be able to exercise in the fresh air with good company and a lot of informal peer support happens along the way.

Our social events have included our summer outing, at the Deer Centre, a creative workshop facilitated by Trustee Emilia, a visit to the cinema to see 'Sunshine on Leith' and our annual Christmas meal which this year was at The Bank in Anstruther. We celebrated Volunteer Week last June by giving the volunteers little thank you gifts as a small token of our appreciation.

Two volunteer talks took place this year; Linda from Samaritans talked about listening skills and the training they give volunteers and Gemma from the One Stop Shop for Autism, Kirkcaldy gave us some very useful information about their services.

I trained seven new volunteers over the last year, and all are matched and providing quality support to their befriendees. Our volunteers continue to receive certificates recognising the time they have given; Saltire Awards for the 18-25 year olds and LINK certificates for everyone else and volunteers have earned certificates for between 25 to 720 hours. Our longest serving volunteer, Frances McBride has been with us for 25 years, first on the Committee and then as a befriendeer. There have been twelve new referrals this year, many have been matched and are experiencing the difference befriending can make Any time donated from a couple of hours to thousands of hours makes a difference to the lives of our service users and may be the best couple of hours in their week. So thank you all sincerely.

I would like to thank my wonderful colleagues for their support over the last year, which has been a difficult one for me personally. Without them I really would have struggled. I would also like to say thanks to the Trustees for all their work and to my supervisor Dorothy, who all work away to support the projects.

Finally, I would like to leave you thinking about some quotes from some of our service users and referrers which is what our service is really about.

Senga Smith,  
Project Manager,  
4<sup>th</sup> May 2023

## **LEVENMOUTH COORDINATOR'S REPORT**

2023 has been a particularly challenging year for the Levenmouth Project with volunteer recruitment being incredibly low, however this seems to be a universal issue with many other charities finding volunteer recruitment an ongoing struggle since the pandemic. I have however trained two new volunteers for the Levenmouth Project and held group training via zoom for volunteers for both adult projects. There was an influx of referrals to the Levenmouth Project at the beginning of this year, unfortunately we don't have the capacity for so many referrals, so many people remain on my waiting list and wherever possible I will sign post referrals onto other services which may be of help.

We have this year had some really lovely social events beginning with our annual summer outing which took place at the Scottish Deer Centre for which we had glorious sunny weather and were able to enjoy an alfresco picnic, we then had our annual Christmas meal at the Bank in Anstruther where we tucked into a two-course meal while admiring the lovely view over the Dreel Burn and Anstruther beach, we had a Christmas art workshop facilitated by Emilia who is also on our committee and we had a day out at the cinema to watch Sunshine on Leith at the Byre Theatre in St Andrews. As well as the social events we have carried on with our monthly wellbeing walks exploring nice areas within Fife.

I took part in the Edinburgh Kilt Walk in September last year and raised a very respectable £502.50 for the adult project and hope to raise more funds when I participate in it again this year. As mentioned the Adult Project is coming to the end of our funding. It has been quite disheartening submitting funding applications and having them rejected, however I remain hopeful that we will get the much-needed funding in place, so LINK can carry on with the very valuable service we provide.

The Adult Project hosted the Spring volunteer talk with Linda from the Dunfermline Samaritans branch, Linda delivered a session on listening and communication using the Samaritans SHUSH active listening tips, which are essential skills for any volunteer to have.

I'd like to finish by thanking my lovely work colleagues and our wonderful trustees. And a big thank you to Senga for being a supportive and understanding manager. And a big thank you to all of our fantastic volunteers.

Rebecca Manley,  
Project Coordinator,  
Levenmouth Project,  
May 2023