

LINK

**East Fife Mental Health Adolescent Befriending
Project**

Annual Report 2022 - 2023

"When working with young people there are times when you will see results in 10 seconds and there are times you won't see it for 10 years. Either way, keep planting those seeds of character, eventually they bloom"



Delivered by



Scottish Charity No. SC027493

ABOUT LINK

LINK Adolescent Project was established in January 2003 to provide a befriending service for adolescents (12 – 18 year olds) who were marginalised and isolated due to a mental health issue in the East Fife area. In 2005 the service area expanded to include Levenmouth and in October 2013 service provision increased from 16 to 18 matches. Expansion into the Glenrothes area started in August 2019, with a further expansion into Kirkcaldy in January 2023. Service provision now stands at 32 matches.

The Project recruits, trains and supports suitable volunteers and matches them with young people referred to the organisation by a recognised Key Worker.

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. This is done by offering the befriender an opportunity to form a trusting relationship, which may enable them to develop a greater degree of resilience, self-confidence, self-esteem and connectedness.

This year LINK celebrates its 20th birthday. We will be celebrating in the summer at our annual BBQ with volunteers and young people both past and present.

"If it wasn't for LINK I wouldn't be here."

Befriending changes and saves lives

STAFF/COMMITTEE

LINK is funded for a Project Manager on 27 hours to train, support and supervise 18 volunteers and their matches, and a Project Co-ordinator on 21 hours a week to support 14 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 Burghilea - Volunteer
Member: Gill Lyth - Volunteer (until August 2022)
Member: Neil Kinmont – Befriender (from April 2022)
Volunteer Rep: Justine Retford (August 2022)
Link Worker: Shelley Crombie - Social Work Services (until November 2022)
LeeAnn Sloan (from November 2022)

LINK is proud to have representation on the Board of Trustees from our local community including Healthcare Professionals, Volunteer Befrienders, people with lived experience and others from varying backgrounds in mental health, community work and teaching.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Happy 20th birthday to the Adolescent Project It has been an absolute privilege being in post since 7th January 2003 – setting the service up; seeing it through three area expansions, the latest being Kirkcaldy which went live 1st March; and gaining a wonderful colleague in Maria. The milestone will be celebrated at this year's summer event, a combined BBQ & Birthday Bash on the 26th July.

Year's Summary:

- 29 volunteers have befriended 28 young people; 13 newly trained befrienders; 1 Committee Volunteer Rep.
- 22 referrals. Noticeable increase in referrals with the cost-of-living crisis, especially around anxiety, loneliness and isolation.
- 8 Saltire and 12 Over 25s certificates have been presented to volunteers to acknowledge their time commitment to befriending.

Social Events – we excelled ourselves and held five this year - Bowling, BBQ, Cluny Activities, Christmas Meal and back to Bowling. These events can open up new experiences for the young people, in a safe and supported way, with peer friendships flourishing.

Funding – has been exceptionally challenging to secure. Children in Need and Young Start monies both finished in December 2022. After several stressful months of application submissions and initial rejections, our hard work was rewarded with a 3-year bid to Young Start, Lottery Community Fund being approved, after a very intense assessment process. Thankfully various other grants have also since been successful.

Befriending Week – Befriending Networks again approached the Project to be part of their media celebrations. Jane's powerful story had well deserved wow reactions from funders and stakeholders alike. [#Befriendings supportive, understanding, and non-judgmental](#)

Volunteer's Week – I sent all volunteers a wee thank you card and keyring to mark the Week. It was wonderful seeing Jade's video closing Befriending Network's Volunteer's Week media publicity - [Everyone in your life is lucky to have you.](#)

Volunteer Talks – Gemma from Scottish Autism's Fife One Stop Shop and Samaritans "Learn to Listen" workshop delivered by Linda. Both were extremely interesting and engaging, receiving very positive feedback from attendees. Speakers very kindly give up their time to deliver these informative events.

Thank you to all our amazing volunteers, special mentions – farewell to media star Liam who reluctantly came off the Committee due to PhD study pressures; and Dysart who has befriended with LINK for 15 years, recently hitting 1,300 volunteering hours! An impressively positive note to end this year's update on.

Jane Maciver, Adolescent Project Manager, 31.3.2023

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The year was off to a fantastic start with a flurry of interest in volunteering which continued throughout the months to follow. It is a positive sign that the Glenrothes project is becoming embedded in the community which gives me confidence that the expansion into Kirkcaldy will develop in a similar way. I trained 7 volunteer befrienders using a mix of online training, 1-2-1 and in-person group session, depending on the volunteers needs and availability. One ex-young person trained to become a volunteer befriender which was extra special. I received 7 referrals to the project, matching 3, with further matches to be made in the next few months.

Befriending Networks invited LINK to attend their Volunteers Week celebrations in Edinburgh. I went along with current volunteer Melissa who received a certificate of thanks along with a thermal mug and badge. We were the only organisation representing Fife, with all the others being from East Lothian. It was wonderful hearing about the work other befriending projects do and the impact they have on people's lives.

We held a Volunteer Talk with guest speaker Gemma from Fife One Stop Shop (Scottish Autism). This was a popular topic with many commenting on how informative and relevant it was to both befriending and their personal life.

I have been fortunate to attend many excellent in-person events which have been invaluable for networking and keeping my knowledge up-to-date; Our Minds Matter residential focusing on mindfulness, trauma, attachment, anxiety and stress; Suicide Prevention Conference & Time, Space Compassion; Voluntary Health Scotland (Fair Health Who Gets It); Fife Women's Tent International Women's Day celebration. Many of these events are interwoven with sobering and stark statistics of people in crisis but at the same time it is such a joy to share the amazing work and hear first-hand people's stories of survival, putting into context where befriending fits in and can change lives.

Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers that give up their time to support and inspire young people. We couldn't do it without you!

Maria Suttie, Project Coordinator, 31.03.23

SOCIAL EVENTS



LINK's annual BBQ was held in summer 2022. Time to relax, share experiences, have fun and enjoy great food.

Cluny Clays trip in Autumn 2022 where we tried out the Segways and disc golf.



"The social events were good as you could talk to other befrienders to see if they had been through the same thing with their befriender and get some advice."

SOCIAL EVENTS



Festive jumpers and fabulous food.
Our annual Christmas celebration was a wonderful evening for our volunteers and young people to get together and have fun.



Spring bowling night. Another popular event for our volunteers and young people. After a game of bowling, we had some food and enjoyed catching up with each other and getting to know new people.



LINK 2022 – 2023

**19 newly trained
volunteers**

**28 current
volunteers**

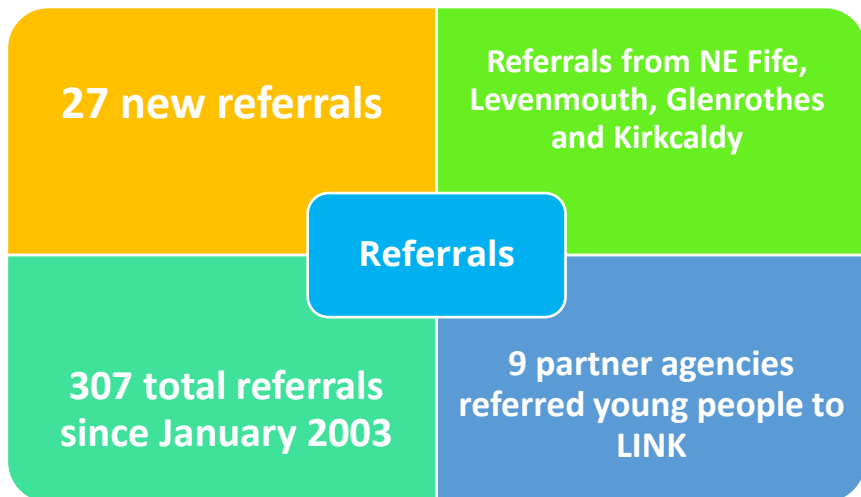
Volunteers

**181 total number of
befrienders trained
to date**

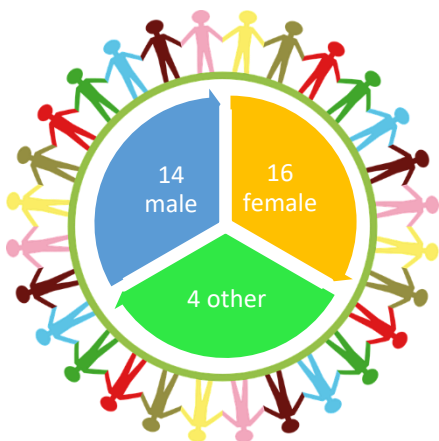
**34 volunteers have
befriended 34 young
people**

8 Saltire Awards and 13 over 25's certificates have been awarded to volunteers for their commitment in befriending.

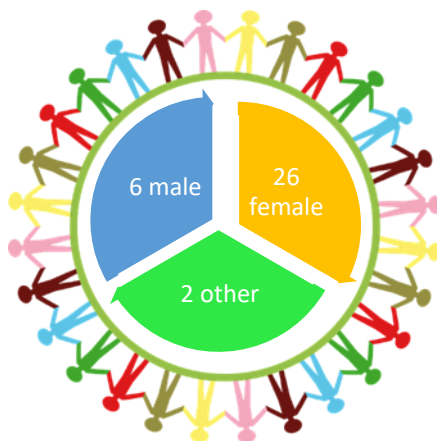




Young People



Volunteers



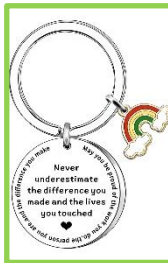
*other includes non-binary, trans, gender fluid or did not wish to identify

VOLUNTEERS



LINK was invited by Befriending Networks to celebrate Volunteers Week and the amazing work our volunteers do in befriending.

Melissa receiving her certificate from Befriending Networks



Thank you gifts to celebrate Volunteers Week 2022



Jade and Alfie receiving their Outstanding Befriender badges.

Callie took part in the Edinburgh Marathon in May 2022 with a fantastic time of 5h6m45s. What an amazing feat of physical and mental strength. Callie raised a fantastic £333 for LINK.



"My favourite memory of being a befriender was helping the befriender and seeing them progress. Helping with their problems, see if they can solve it themselves but guide them through it if needed."

During Befriending Week in November 2022, Jane shared her story with Befriending Networks on how LINK transformed her life:

"For a long time, the only word I felt described me was lost. As a child I struggled to cope with everyday things, such as attending classes or even sitting still and so I often felt misunderstood and labelled as a problem. For this reason, High School was an unpleasant experience for me. My anxiety meant I struggled to relate with people my age and by fourteen I was taken out of regular classes with my peers and placed in the Learning Support department. I think that because you couldn't 'see' what was wrong it was hard for them to understand how best to support me and I found this quite difficult. Soon I started to protect myself from the world – distancing and isolating myself from everyone. Around this time, I was self-harming, because I thought it would help me survive my terrifying life.

Everything changed when I got involved with Link Befriending whose approach wasn't like anything I'd experienced from other services. By this point I wasn't socialising with my peers and could barely cope going anywhere that wasn't home, especially at the weekends or evenings. Living on a remote farm in rural fife, with no access to public transport, also gave me less of an incentive to go out. I felt completely alone. Over four years I had three incredible befrienders; all with different ages, backgrounds and experiences. They didn't try to change me or make me better, they just accepted me for being me. I really liked was that they weren't counsellors – they were just normal, supportive, understanding and non-judgmental people who helped which is what I needed most in my life. Words can describe what that meant.

Through working with LINK I gained more confidence in myself, learned to trust and more importantly it gave me something to look forward to. I began to feel more comfortable talking to people and learnt how to express my feelings more clearly. I learnt that it was OK to have fun and how to enjoy life again. All this didn't happen overnight but it was worth it. Everything that I gained from the experience has had a positive impact on my life. I've just gained a first-class degree Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design at Dundee University and have been offered a residency. I hope to continue building my career as an artist and am working towards building a foundry at home.

I have a lot of great memories from my adventures with my befrienders. Even after all this time I get invited to the summer BBQ's and a yearly summer catch up of what I've been up to. Being invited means a lot because it proves to me that I was never just a name or a number on a piece of paper. I was a person worth helping."

Words from Young People.....

"the befriending service has helped me a bunch, I no longer need a befriender as I'm doing okay now"

"I had fun and it gave me the chance to get out and do 'fun things' which I didn't have the opportunity to do in my life at that point. My befriender accepted me for me and made me feel wanted and appreciated."

"I don't know what would have happened to me to be honest – when things went wrong, I didn't 'like' being around other people but through LINK, I'm sort of back to being almost me. My 3 befrienders provided me with emotional support when I needed it and never judged me, which was great. I'm really going to miss LINK."

"Before the befriending service I was anxious and rarely left the house. Since meeting with my befriender I have become a better version of me. It's been such a journey, the best part was knowing you have people you can depend on."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you. I needed to let you know how thankful I am for all that you have done for me. I can't believe it's been 4 years and what a difference has been made. I never would have thought back then that I would be where I am now and I owe a lot of that to you. Thank you for being an amazing, funny, smart and kind friend, a person that I can count on and is always able to cheer me up. You're a great person and everyone in your life is lucky to have you."

Words from volunteers.....

"I think the most important thing I learned or at least got plenty practice of, was accepting my befriender for who he is and not giving up on him at the first sign of trouble – so that he sees people don't always give up."

"On a personal level, it taught me patience, helped me to better understand another person and their individual struggles, and how best to help them cope and work through them."

"LINK is a very valuable service, which has a very positive affect on people's lives, in a simple but profound way. It was a very rewarding experience getting to know my befriender, and my befriender getting to know me. I really liked that we seemed a very good match. I really appreciated meeting up with the co-ordinator every month. Given that befriending involves working alone it is great to feel supported through regular meetings."

"My befriender became a befriender, leaving me a very proud befriender."

..... and parents/carers

"Gave her confidence, something to look forward to, a friend, encouraged her to do things, find hobbies. LINK is a fantastic service, made a massive difference, really helped. Thank you for everything, you really made a difference, not just for my daughter but for us as a family."

"Helped her with her social skills and independence. It is an excellent service. Well organised matches and lots of fun social events."

"M was just perfect. This is a 5 service and has made a world of difference to J's life."*

"He always seems animated when he comes home and doesn't go back to bed – which is a big deal and has a positive effect for the rest of the day."

FUNDING

- Young Start £98,804 over 3 years
- Mary Moore awarded £13,000
- Fife Council's Community Recovery Fund £10,000 over 2 years
- St A University, Community Fund £1,550
- £1,500 from the R&A "Town Fund"
- St Andrews Ball, £1,000
- The September charity golf event raised £938.85. Which Diageo will double match fund
- Cash for Kids, £600
- £500 from Rotary club of Kilrymont St Andrews
- Children in Need, cost of living grant £500
- Ross & Liddle £500
- Provost Tulloch Trust, £500
- Volunteer Callie raised £383 running May's Edinburgh marathon
- Giving Machine £98.22
- Volunteer Allan who donates his expenses £70.18
- East Fife FC catering stands tin contained £57.80
- The Rule charity tin contained £19.35.

Every contribution, no matter how small, really does make a difference to marginalised young people's lives.

LINK also gets an incredible amount of support in kind from the local community, which helps us to deliver our service for the best possible value for money.



THANK YOUS

LINK could not function so efficiently and effectively without the commitment and support provided from a wide range of individuals, organisations and the local community. This year I would like to thank those who have contributed to and supported the Adolescent Project: -

- Our Funders, both past and present. Allan for his volunteer expenses donations.
- Morrisons, St Andrews; Ceres, Penman and Minnick Butchers; Barnetts and Fisher & Donaldson Bakers; the New Inn and Ceres Inns for all their generous BBQ donations.
- Staff at The Rule for their fabulous festive service and food.
- LINK Management Committee who give their time voluntarily. Their efforts on LINK's behalf are deeply appreciated.
- Befriending Networks, our membership body, for their excellent advice, information, support and events.
- Fife Voluntary Action for their events, guidance and potential volunteers.
- Voluntary Health Scotland, who are the national intermediary and network for voluntary health organisations in Scotland.
- Volunteer Talk Speakers – Gemma, Scottish Autism; Linda, Samaritans
- Morag, Families First St Andrews Manager, who was very generous with her time, empathy and funding advice.
- Susan Matson, my super Supervisor and sounding board!
- LINK Staff, without our regular Zoom work and in-person meetings, the past year would have been even more challenging.
- Cluny Clays for their hospitality and the Activity Coordinators for their expertise.
- ProBowl staff for their hard work preparing our food orders.
- Jane, my supervisor for continued support and belief in me in taking the Glenrothes/Kirkcaldy project forward.
- Willie at Digital Fife for being on the end of an email at any website crisis.

And finally, a very special 'Thank You' to our most valued and wonderful volunteer befrienders who make the Project possible by giving their time and commitment to support the young people who are referred to LINK.



<https://www.linkbefriending.org.uk/>