

LINK

East Fife Mental Health **Adult** Befriending Project Annual Report 2024-25

'The best thing is just having someone that cares. I'm not asking for the world.'



Scottish Charity No. SC027493

ABOUT LINK

LINK Adult Befriending Project was established in 1997 to provide a befriending service for adults (aged 18-65) who were marginalised and isolated due to a mental health issue in the East Fife area. The project has since expanded to include Levenmouth and this year there has been a pilot project started in Glenrothes. and in October 2013 service provision increased from 16 to 18 matches. Service provision now stands at 28 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. LINK does this with both 1:1 befriending and through various social outings and group events during the year. All of this offers the befriender an opportunity to form a trusting relationship with their befriender, which may enable them to develop a greater degree of self-confidence and emotional growth, to make use of their own personal resource, to form and maintain relationships with others, attend social and group events with some support and 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.

Befriending changes and saves lives

STAFF/COMMITTEE

LINK is funded for a Project Manager on 27 hours to train, support and supervise 20 volunteers and their befriendees, and a Project Co-ordinator on 16 hours a week to support 8 volunteers.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chair: Susan Matson – retired CAMHS Clinical Nurse Specialist
Vice Chair: Neil Kinmont – Befriender
Secretary: Dorothy Woolley – Volunteer
Treasurer: Lisa Hainey – Solicitor
Member: Jacqueline Goodall, Primary Mental Health Worker, CAMHS
Member: Carole Anderson, retired
Member: Lee Graham, Senior Nurse Therapist, CAMHS
Link Officer: LeeAnn Sloan, Social Worker

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

It's hard to believe I have been in post fourteen years this year, but I'm still here and still enjoying managing this fantastic wee project. It can be hard; this year we, like many other third sector organisations have struggled to attract volunteers. An analysis done by Volunteer Scotland suggests that the cost-of-living crisis is one of the underlying causes. Although we have been short on volunteers, we have still managed to support many service users and some volunteers have been absolute stars and taken on more than one befriender, so thank you.

There has been a good bit of work done this year to top up the small funding deficit for the year 2025/26 but I am positive that we will find that in the next few months. LINK has continued to be funded by The Lottery's Improving Lives fund and Fife Council Health and Social Care Fund and have received funding for a second year from The Agnes Hunter Foundation and the Allen Lane Foundation as well as donations from volunteers and supporters.

The Wellbeing Walk group has been getting out monthly and have managed some lovely walks at St. Andrews beaches, Crail countryside, and Cupar nature trail among other places. 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; an afternoon at Cairnie fruit farm, a games evening, our Christmas meal and a craft evening.

I trained five new volunteers over the last year, and all are matched and providing quality support to their befriended. 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. Volunteers have earned certificates for between 25 to 800 hours. There have been ten 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.

Our befrienders and befriendees get up to lots of different activities throughout the year and here are some examples of that: lunching, wild swimming, a craft group, comedy nights, dog walking on the beach, paddling, picnics, visiting museums, manicures, browsing charity shops, hillwalking, visiting Edinburgh, playing music together, playing pool, going to a support group together, visiting a Farmers Market, golf driving range, cinema, visiting the aquarium and zoo. Lots of fun activities there, but the best bit? Doing them with good company and support, having someone to talk to while out. Not everyone is able to go on big outings, but just value the support and friendship shared over a cuppa. So, a huge thank you to my fabulous team of befrienders!

We worked with a wonderful young filmmaker, Maxine Lidman who is currently studying at St. Andrews University on a short video clip of volunteer and service users' experiences of befriending with fantastic results. It's lovely to hear from the voices that matter. You can see this on our website, www.linkbefriending.org.uk and it will also be presented today.

I would like to thank my fantastic colleagues for their support and friendship over the last year. 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. It truly is a great team to be a part of!

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Hello everybody,

Where to start with 2024. We have a lot of lovely wellbeing walks and social events.

We had lovely afternoon teas at Cairnie Fruit Farm, where we tackled the corn maze played on the big bouncy pillow and raced around a track on pedal go karts. We had a lovely Christmas meal at the Guardbridge Inn, where Senga entertained us with some Christmas tunes on her fiddle and we ate some delicious food.

The monthly wellbeing walks have explored many areas within Fife and are always well received. It's always lovely to see everybody socialising and enjoying the company.

The Levenmouth Project has struggled to gain volunteers, this is something that is felt throughout the third sector, however I've recently trained two new volunteers. I do have some wonderful volunteers who offer much needed support to their befriended. Some activities that my volunteers and their befriended take part in are going for walks, the cinema, bowling, crazy golf or just going for a cup of coffee and a chat. I know that this time spent with a befriendee is so beneficial for people referred to the project and thank my volunteers so much for spending their precious time in this way.

The Levenmouth Project receives a lot of referrals, too many for the project to handle, it's unfortunate that we don't have the capacity to support everyone referred to the project.

I feel very fortunate to be part of a lovely small team of work colleagues who are incredibly supportive and great to work with and want to thank them for their continued support. I would also like to thank our trustees for all that they do. And finally, I'd like to thank Senga for her always being supportive and understanding.

SOCIAL EVENTS



In August we held our summer outing at Cairnie Fruit Farm the weather was mixed, but we had an early lunch and got out in the sun after that all enjoyed the get together. We also had fun on the bouncy pillow, the go carts and in the maze before picking some fruit and sunflowers to take home.



In October we held a Games and Quiz night at the St. Andrews Community Hub where everyone enjoyed playing Scrabble, Tension, the Logo game to name a few and Becky hosted a Halloween themed Quiz.



Our Christmas meal this year was at the Guardbridge Inn, the meal was fantastic, and we had a little live music from Senga on her fiddle afterwards.



The Wellbeing Walks this year have been held at Crail, Cupar, St. Andrews and have included beach and countryside walks. The walks are always followed up by a cuppa and cake and a good blether. Volunteers, service users, staff and committee have all joined us on the walks.

LINK 2024 - 2025



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 800 hours.

17 new referrals

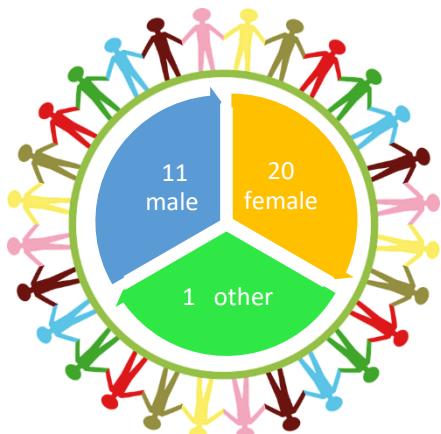
**Referrals from
throughout NE Fife
and Levenmouth**

Referrals

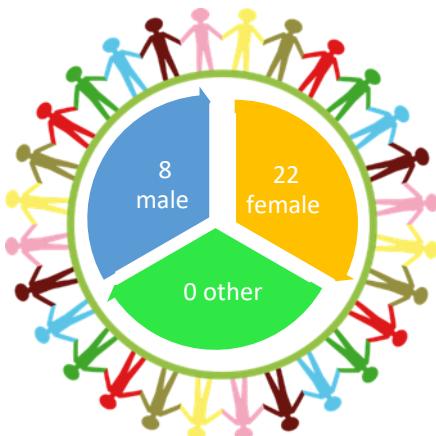
**400 total referrals
since August 1997**

**Greatest number of
referrals are in 41-65 age
bracket and female**

Service Users



Volunteers



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

Words from Service Users.....

"I didn't think it was going to be as good as it turned out to be. It's a hundred times better than what I thought. I never knew what friends were before."

"Just having someone to have a craic with."

"I was totally isolated before, I really look forward to meeting 'B', she really lifts my spirits. I've even been to a concert, my first in years."

"It is nice meeting and speaking about things not relating to health issues. I felt safe. The best bit was knowing I had someone I could speak to. 'A' was very friendly, my favourite thing was her smile and kindness. I always look forward to seeing and speaking with her."

"I liked that we were of the same generation and had a similar knowledge of the area. My favourite memory was a surprise visit to the golf range."

"My favourite meeting was when we got strawberries and went to the beach."

Words from volunteers.....

"Befriending with LINK has given me the opportunity to get direct experience working with people experiencing mental health difficulties. It was particularly rewarding to see the huge impact that social connection has on people, and being able to see their progress in gaining confidence and managing their wellbeing was invaluable."

"My time spent volunteering with the organisation has solidified the notion that volunteering helps volunteers too."

"Seeing an improvement in my befriendee's confidence and being someone they could learn to trust, has been particularly fulfilling and has also boosted my own confidence."

"One thing I particularly enjoyed about being a befriendee was knowing I was making a positive difference to someone's life. After meeting with my befriendee, I always felt the positive impact of having brightened up their day. This was greatly rewarding."

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

"I'm a huge fan of your service, you do great work. I know how much I values it."

..... and referrers

FUNDING

Thanks to our main funders:

- The National Lottery Community Fund who funded us with £49,001
- Fife Council Health and Social Care £12,215 and £1505 (Rural Poverty Fund)
- Agnes Hunter Foundation £6000
- Allen Lane Foundation £3,500

Thanks also to all our smaller organisations and individuals who make a difference by donating what they can including volunteer Kathleen Mackenzie who regularly donates her expenses.

Every contribution, no matter how small, truly makes a positive difference to marginalised 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 we would like to thank those who have contributed to and supported the Adult Project: -

- Our Funders, both past and present. Kathleen for her volunteer expenses donations.
- Neil Kinmont for sharing his time and experience at training with our new volunteers and helping at volunteer fayres.
- Staff at The Guardbridge Inn for their fabulous festive service and food.
- Linda Leighton for independently examining our accounts and preparing them for OSCR
- Maria Suttie, my admin worker yet again I must thank her for her patience, hard work, organisational and IT skills that have supported me through the year.
- 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.
- Dorothy Woolley for supervising me for another year.
- LINK Staff for their superb peer support.
- St John & Dairsie Churches and NEF Community Hub for their room hire and hospitality
- Fife College, Abertay and University of Dundee for extending their invitation to events.

And finally, my wonderful volunteers because without you the project would be nothing. Thank You!



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