



BN(S) Annual Conference/AGM 2003

Befriending and Self-esteem

Thursday, 3rd October 2003, Methodist Central Hall, 2 West Tollcross, Edinburgh

Although we often hear about, read about and think about self-esteem and how it affects our lives, it tends to be a hazily defined concept that is difficult to pin down, quantify and refer to with any certainty. Many befriending projects claim to have an impact on self-esteem, but what exactly *is* self-esteem – how do we define it? Quantify it? Measure its impact; its progress? And what are the positive and negative factors affecting it?

The Annual Conference 2003 provided the opportunity for befriending projects to consider these questions and to try to pin down the links between self-esteem and befriending. The afternoon workshops offered delegates the chance to gather evidence and discuss typical self-esteem issues while the Annual General Meeting offered the chance for members to hear about and comment on BN(S) work in 2002/3 and the Network's plans for the future. Seventy-four delegates representing 51 varied befriending projects from Scotland and England attended the event.

Defining self-esteem and the links between self-esteem and befriending

Cathy Richards, Clinical Psychologist, Young People's Unit, Royal Edinburgh Hospital

Defining self-esteem

Using a series of Powerpoint slides, Cathy Richards' presentation built up a picture of self-esteem, exploring and situating it within the dynamics of a cognitive behavioural therapy model. Starting off by defining it as a feeling of self worth that we carry around with us, an inner picture of how we see ourselves, she went on to expand and apply this feeling, this inner picture, to the many different areas in people's lives that it affects, suggesting that it should be seen as a global and situational phenomenon.¹

Defining low self-esteem

People with low self-esteem tend towards having pervasive feelings of inferiority, a sense of unworthiness and feelings of loneliness or insecurity. They are often overly sensitive to criticism and tend to dismiss positive feedback. An upbeat comment such as 'your hair looks great today' is often distorted into meaning 'it must have been looking awful yesterday'. Citing research done by Fennell², that:

'low esteem may be seen as a learned, negative global judgement about me as a person which ... shapes how a person thinks, feels and behaves on a day-to-day basis ... which in turn is maintained, reinforced and strengthened by ongoing biases in cognitive processing and by maladaptive behaviour'

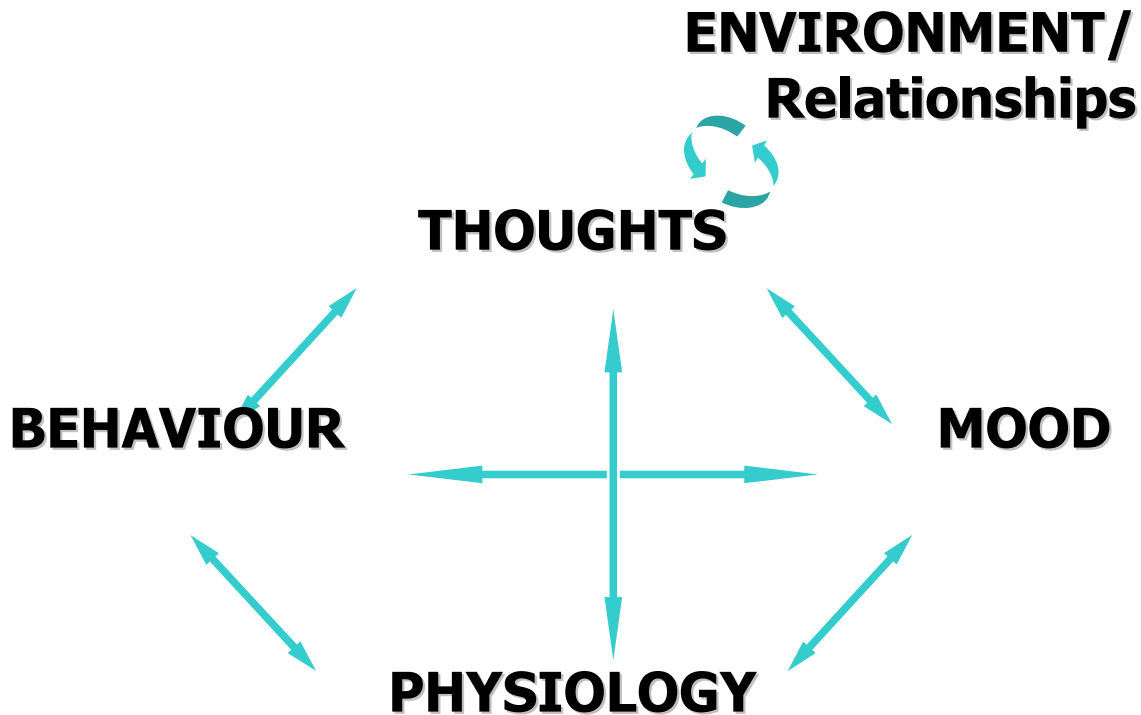
Cathy went on to refer to a cognitive behavioural therapy model where the intrinsic interconnectedness of our core beliefs (I am worthless; I am not good enough); our intermediate beliefs (I need to change

¹ See Mruk, C (1999) *Self-esteem: Research, Theory and Practice*, London: Free Association Books.

² See Fennell, M (1998) 'Low Self-esteem' in Tarrier, Wells and Haddock (eds), *Treating Complex Cases*, London: Wiley

myself in order to avoid rejection) and our automatic thoughts form a negative spiral which is self-perpetuating and difficult to escape.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy:



Risk factors of low self-esteem

Low self-esteem can be an aspect or consequence of other difficulties such as depression and may play a role in the development of depression, eating disorders, deliberate self harm and suicidal behaviour.

High self-esteem and resilience

High self-esteem, on the other hand, acts as a protective factor and leads to increased autonomy and greater openness to alternatives. It is associated with favourable outcomes in dealing with problems.

Self-esteem and values

Self-esteem is linked to an individual's ability to attain the standards expected of them and their ability to behave in a way which matches their internal values and the values held by those around them. Achieving five Grade Bs at Higher level might be fantastic news for one young person, but might not be good enough for the teenager attending a highly competitive, academic school.

Parental factors affecting the development of self-esteem

Referring to the research done by Coopersmith in the 1960s, Cathy suggested that the following were key factors in the development of a child's self-esteem:

- Parental involvement (but not smothering)
- Parental warmth (and acceptance of child's strengths and weaknesses)

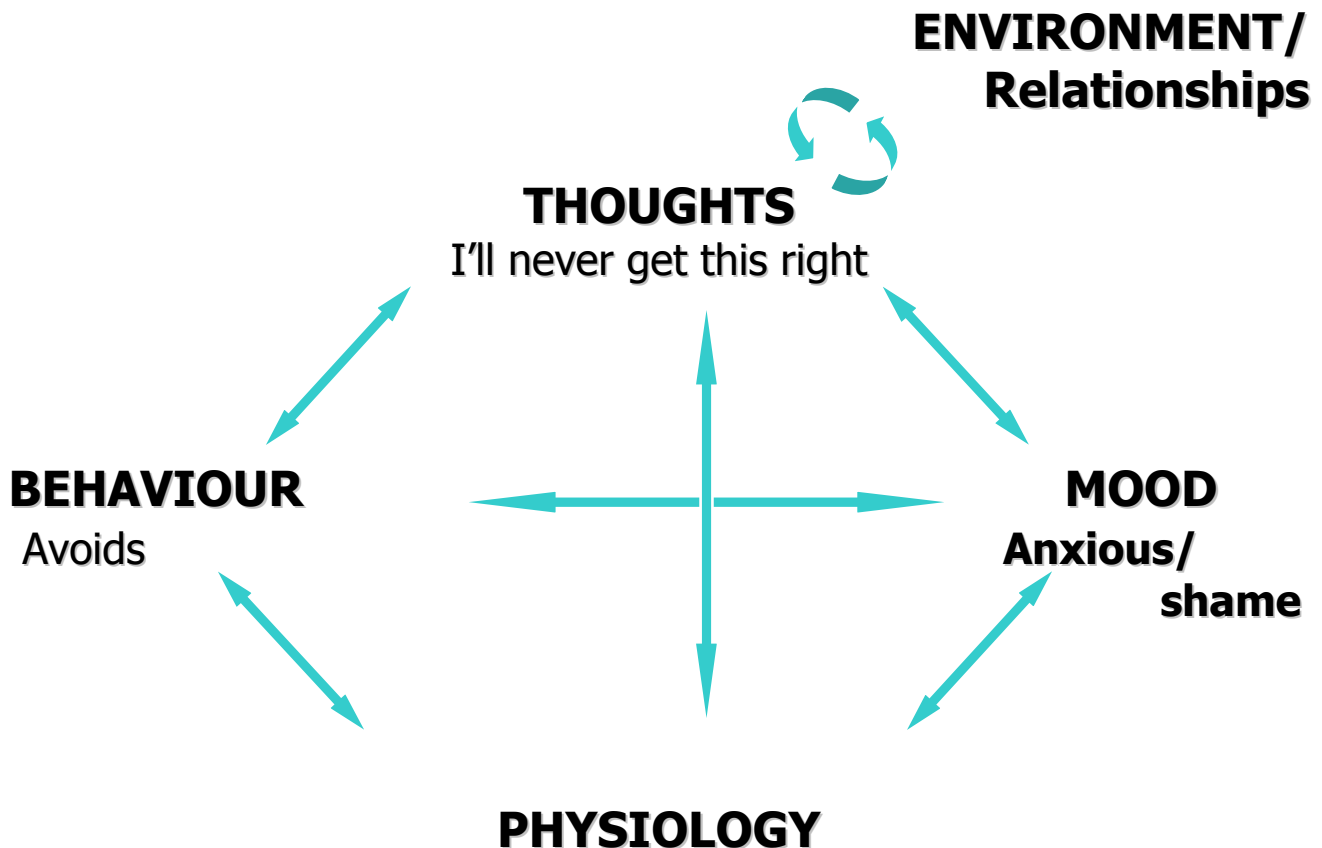
- Clear parental expectations (setting high but not impossible expectations and maintaining consistent limits)
- Respect towards child (a willingness to discuss things and negotiate disagreements, honouring agreements and trying to explain things and recognise a child's preferences)
- Modelling (parents who face challenges openly and don't avoid them expose their children to problem-solving strategies early on)

Helping to enhance self-esteem³

Cathy went on to suggest that the following methods helped to enhance self-esteem:

- Behaving in an accepting and caring way
- Providing constructive feedback that focuses on the positive rather than the negative (remembering that too much positive feedback can be overwhelming to someone with very low self-esteem so feedback should be given in smaller, more neutral doses)
- Positive self talk: encouraging thoughts such as 'I will feel better for having a go' which will lead to less anxiety rather than thoughts such as 'I'll never get this right'. A negative cognitive behavioural model might look like:

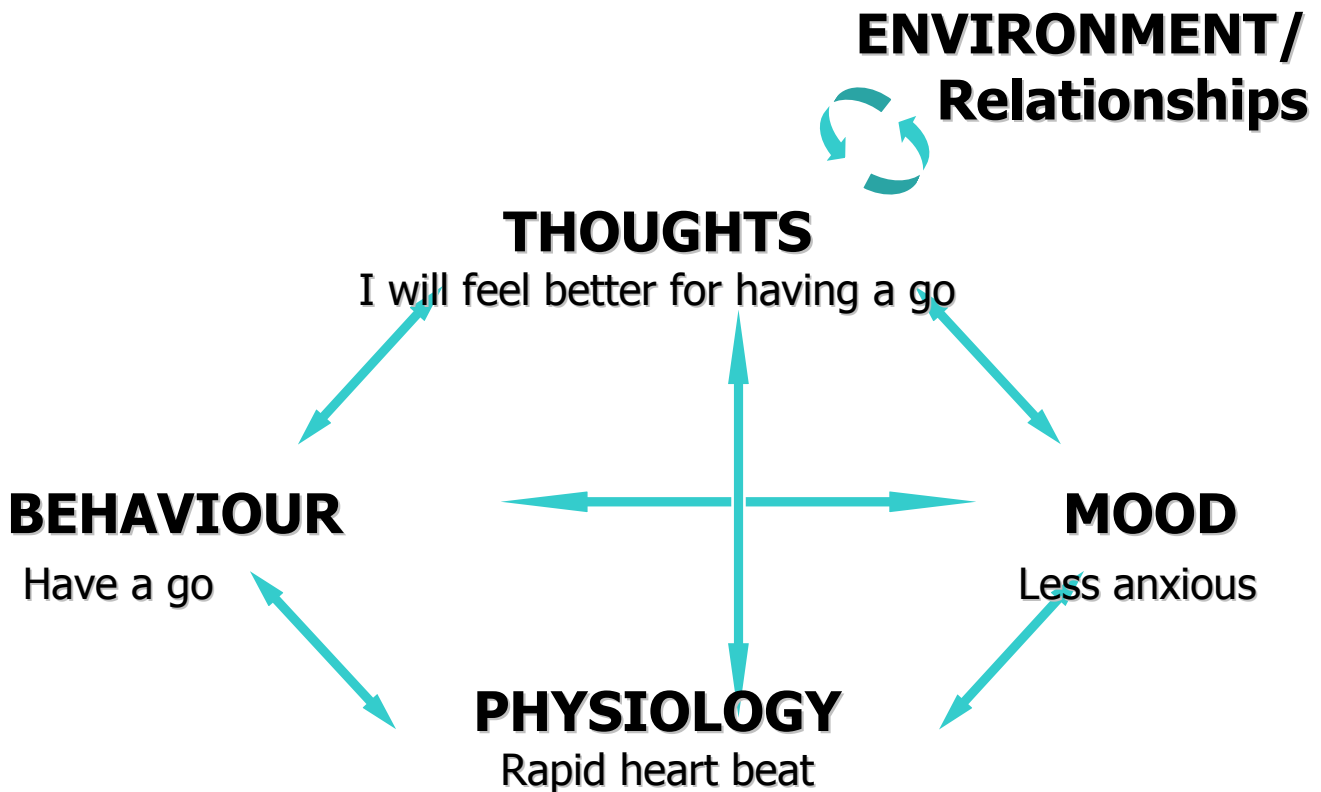
Cognitive Behavioural Model:



³ See Mruk

A positive model might look like:

Cognitive Behavioural Model:



Helping to enhance self-esteem: using modelling

- Conflict: try to give practical tasks which will give a befriender the experience of doing things in a supported way – things they might not have the confidence to do alone e.g. getting on a bus
- Help extend their social network
- Review your own performance
- Increase problem-solving skills by recognising that a problem exists
- Build up the ability to identify possible responses to a problem and their likely outcomes, selecting the most appropriate response, develop a realistic plan to reach that goal, review how it all went for next time.

Befriending and self-esteem: some research done

- Fabian and Becker (2001) mention befriending projects and psychosocial support schemes for groups at risk of developing a depressive disorder suggest that they could have a positive impact on public health
- Bradshaw and Haddock (1998) emphasise the importance of helping to build social networks.

References and further reading:

Carlock, CJ (ed) *Enhancing Self-esteem*, Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis

Fennell, M (1998), 'Low Self-esteem' in Tarrier, Wells and Haddock (eds), *Treating Complex Cases*, London: Wiley

Fennell, M (1999), *Overcoming Low Self-esteem: a self-help guide to using cognitive behavioural techniques*, London: Robinson

Lindenfield, G (1995), *Self-esteem*, Glasgow: Thomsons

Mruk, C (1999), *Self-esteem: research, theory and practice*, London: Free Association Books

Richards, C., Connon, N., Scott, E., (2002) www.depressioninteenagers.co.uk (a web-based resource with more information about problem-solving and the CBT model).

Observations from a Befriending Project

from Joette Thomas, Manager of Saheliya

Background to the project

Saheliya is a mental health support project for black and minority ethnic women in Edinburgh. It has had a befriending service since 1994 and currently has befrienders speaking 11 languages. The aim of the service is to offer support to these women so that they gain confidence and self-esteem.

Common feelings of low self-esteem in Saheliya's clients

Joette highlighted feelings of inferiority, unworthiness and isolation (felt for instance by not being able to speak English, by not having the confidence to go out) as indicators of low self-esteem in her clients.

Befriending and its impact: examples from Saheliya's evaluation

The main benefit of befriending is that it improves confidence (and improves English). Joette stressed that it is often the small things such as ordering a coffee, getting on a bus, going out after dark, which feel enormous to vulnerable people.

What helps support and encourage self-esteem

- A caring manner
- Positive feedback (Cathy's very interesting reference to too much positive feedback being overwhelming should be incorporated into training for befrienders).

Joette finished her talk by commenting on the lack of research on self-esteem and befriending with a simple plea - publish!!

Questions and Answers Session:

Q: How do you get people to do/to feel something different to what they're feeling?

A: Help your befriender unravel their feelings by asking them:

- If you saw a friend do this, what would you think?
- What evidence do you have?

Try and persuade your befriender to experiment with looking at things in different ways to encourage greater flexibility in their thinking.

Q: How do you motivate a child in a difficult family situation?

A: See yourself as being similar to a good teacher – the sort of teacher who is able to give good, constructive feedback; the sort of person who can provide and encourage an alternative internal model. Projects need to bear in mind that befrienders will need support to help them motivate their befriendeds. Reminding befrienders of their value to their befriendeds; of how much can be achieved in just two hours a week, is important in such support.

Q: Does befriending have a long-term impact? Does it change self-esteem?

A: This is a very difficult question to answer as a lot will depend on what befriending is needed for and how complex the individual's needs are. The best answer that can be given is that befriending can build in a protective factor; it can provide a good 'coping' model by providing practical examples. The strength of befriending is that it is a practical set-up which allows people to have a go.

Q: Should projects encourage reminiscing as a way of boosting self-esteem or does reminiscing/thinking back to the past trap a befriender in a negative cycle?

A: The heart of the issue here is the *quality* of the befriending relationship; the warmth, acceptance and interest that the befriender is showing. Reminiscing can be useful – Joette told the story of one of her befrienders who felt that her befriending relationship only moved onto a meaningful level the day she noticed a photograph on her befriender's mantelpiece and encouraged him to talk about it. Reminiscing about the story behind the photograph gave her befriender a voice and their befriending relationship the connection that had hitherto been lacking.

Evaluating Self-esteem in Befriending Projects

by Charlie Murphy, Dementia Services Development Centre, University of Stirling

The aim of this talk was to offer delegates an effective way of looking at; thinking about and approaching evaluation in general – the evaluation (and measurement) of self-esteem in particular. Charlie's talk highlighted the questions which need to be asked during an evaluation process and offered some practical steps to take. Charlie's overall message to the conference was to keep the message simple; to keep asking, 'are we doing a good job'; to keep working out ways to keep funders on board.

The talk kicked off with asking the central question: *why do we evaluate?* Typical reasons for why projects undertake evaluation are because:

- Funders demand it
- Senior management demand it
- It supports future funding applications
- It inspires others to deliver a similar service
- It informs users, potential users and the public to find out how we are doing

2) *How should we approach the evaluation task?*

It is important to set up an evaluation process that brings people on board so that the evaluation task doesn't feel like an additional, onerous burden. It is essential to make the task inclusive, understandable and accessible; to make it feel intrinsic to the project's aims; to make it an organic process and to give it a sense of ownership.

3) *What might improved self-esteem look like in a befriending project?*

It is important to work out what improved self-esteem might look like in your project at the start of an evaluation. Examples here might include: "I find it easier to talk to people now," "Others seem to listen to me more than they used to," "I can turn up on time," "I go to the leisure centre on Thursdays – by myself ..."

4) *How to measure such manifestations/interpretations of self-esteem*

There are no hard and fast rules here. It is helpful to measure manifestations of self-esteem by dividing them into project level and individual level and by looking at the synergy between the two i.e.

- 4.i) Decide/agree what self-esteem looks like (both at a project and an individual level)
- 4.ii) Decide/agree how you will recognise if it has changed
- 4.iii) Establish a baseline against which to measure change
- 4.iv) Agree the logistics of measuring change: the when, the where, the who.

4.i) Decide/agree what self-esteem looks like (both at a project and an individual level)

Examples here might include: a befriended being able to write a job application, use community/leisure facilities independently, develop a new interest/hobby, stand up for themselves, make telephone calls to official bodies, speaker in public, ask for help, feel an active part of the community, participate in formal or informal social activities.

4.ii) Decide/agree how you will recognise if it has changed

It is the quality of experience which you are looking for here. Typical methods enabling recognition might include using: cartooning/artwork; video/photographs; diaries; creative writing; case studies; examination of project records; plain and simple asking e.g. interviews, questionnaires etc

4.iii) Establish a baseline against which to measure change

There are two central issues here: a) how do you establish a baseline and b) how do you measure change?

a) Establishing a baseline: examples of questions you can ask to help establish a baseline might include:

- Asking about agreed manifestations of self-esteem from before
- Asking about what has changed for the person since starting
- Asking about what might be responsible for the changes

b) How do we measure change? What we are measuring here is the distance travelled. In other words, how we have travelled from:

- 'I don't think much of myself' to
- 'There are some good things about me' to
- 'There are a lot of things about myself I would like to change' to
- 'I like myself'

But what underpins the scales of measurement? How can we break down the four bullet points above into meaningful scales? And even if we *can* measure them out into scales, should we be using such a 'quantifiable' method in our projects?

While there are countless scales of measurement used, they do serve a role: for instance, it is very helpful to be able to get back to funders and say 25% of befriendees detected change. So how would we go about being able to do this?

- Perhaps use information from the assessment process
- Include expectations if possible

4.iv) Agree the logistics of measuring change: the when, the where, the who:

- At what stage are you in the befriending relationship: six months in? A year?
- Venue: should the evaluation process be held in an informal venue? An independent one?
- Who: balancing independence with relaxing, comfortable experience for person – befriender, co-ordinator; management committee member; outside person

5) *Other considerations to bear in mind during an evaluation process*

- Be prepared for negative comments *and* to act on these
- Distinguish process and outcome
- Attribution (important here to bear in mind issues such as consent and confidentiality)
- Communication problems which might make an evaluation process difficult to carry out
- Intrusion (into workload for instance)

6) *When not to measure self-esteem using standard scales*

- Disagreement about what self-esteem is
- Disagreement about what scales measure
- Cultural issues (for instance, the Maori value humility above feelings of self-esteem)
- Relies on clarity of self awareness
- Difficulties in administering – time, literacy, intrusion into workload; similarly, there are issues of consent and confidentiality
- Doesn't specify what has changed ie what exactly does it tell us?
- Ambitiousness (!) of changing self-esteem (Is there an instrument subtle enough to change or measure self-esteem in a relationship that only lasts two hours a week?)

At the end of his talk, Charlie finished with a thought-provoking slide to sum up: a blank page; inserted to emphasise and remind us that there are no hard and fast rules to an evaluation process.

Self-esteem and Evaluation: Observations from a Befriending Project

Joette Thomas, Manager of Saheliya

Joette highlighted the following as being key to a successful evaluation:

1. Illustrate and gather evidence – collect as many stories as you can to gather evidence and collate experience
2. Provide support – three out of five befrienders in one of the project's Joette has worked with, Two's Company, have mental health problems of their own. Effective support for befrienders today might mean having a pool of befrienders for tomorrow. Main breakthrough is that befriending offers a new lease of life
3. Be aware of confidentiality – this is a very sensitive issue, particularly with minority cultures
4. Keep the process 'mutual'
5. Remember that you are making a difference!

Questions and Answers Session

Q: What are the standard scales that you were referring to in your talk, Charlie?

A: There are many different scales of measurement with different variations and nuances

Q: How do you measure progress in dementia?

A: Another talk! In essence, by building up a relationship; by building in methods such as reminiscing which offer clues and insights that are easier to quantify. Joette suggested that it was also important to remember to include your referrers wherever possible – they have an idea of who the person was before and will be able to trace the picture and the benefits.

Q: How do you select material that goes towards an evaluation?

A: Choose whatever is practical; choosing your method is more important than the number of people you bring on board to provide comment and feedback.

Q: How do you interview children about self-esteem?

A: Using creative methods such as pictures and storytelling can be very effective here (these are also particularly good for children with learning difficulties). Design questionnaires which appeal to kids and choose a practical angle to the questions asked e.g. what are you doing now; what do you enjoy? Remember that behavioural changes provide good clues to a child's progress.

Q: How can projects approach internal evaluation?

A: Observations; accounts. Student placements are good for writing up evaluations for free; peer evaluation.

References:

Charlie and Joette referred to the following evaluation reports during their talks. Copies of each report are available from the BN(S) documentation library.

- ASH: *The Evaluation Journey*
- Two's Company
- Saheliya's Evaluation
- East Lothian Befriending Scheme Evaluation

Annual General Meeting 2002/03

Carole Nicol, the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of Befriending Network (Scotland) welcomed delegates to the Annual General Meeting for 2002/03.

Annual Report: Mike Nicholson (Development Manager) highlighted that 2002/03 had been a year of developing services and gaining structure. With support from the Community Fund the new Information Service had started and Rebecca Dodd worked well to establish systems to deal with enquiries, a new library, developed the website including a members area, produced new Resource Sheets on good practice issues, and took over the work on the newsletter and directory. Mike thanked Rebecca for her hard work and noted that she had recently left and been replaced by Sam Rospigliosi.

Mike highlighted work undertaken in the year under the four headings of the organisation's Strategic Plan.

Strategic Aim 1 – Explore options to develop for support befriending projects throughout the UK

BN(S) had undertaken a survey of 900 projects in England and Wales, receiving a 33% return of which over 70% were interested in a UK befriending network. As a result of this a sub group of the Board had developed a potential model for development; office based in Scotland, contracts provided to local projects to manage networking and training opportunities in different regions. Funding proposals are now being drafted to pilot this approach in three areas in England.

Strategic Aim 2 – Improve Practice in Befriending Projects

In the year 2002/03 over 500 enquiries dealt with, library of project documentation expanded, model forms produced, website developed with the addition of a members' area, Directory of Members produced, 4 issues of 'Net Gain', 4 Resource Sheets on good practice issues, 3 sets of Common Ground Meetings held in 9 locations, 14 training events runs for 125 participants and the Training Toolkit designed and distributed.

Strategic Aim 3 – Be the leading thinkers in the field of befriending

External training and consultancy developed, contributions made to research work with Universities of Bristol and Aberdeen, representation on voluntary sector committees with VDS and SCVO.

Strategic Aim 4 – Be a quality voluntary organisation

Review undertaken of skills and experience on Board of Directors and appointments made to increase knowledge of management, personnel and fundraising issues. Development of Sub Groups involving member projects working on objectives relating to each of the Strategic Aims.

Formation of Personnel Sub Group and Income Generation Sub Group means that two key management areas are being specifically addressed.

Capacity Building grant from Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland enabled BN(S) to buy in consultants time to assist in organisational development.

Plans for future include looking at development of a stronger UK network, a specific Training Officer post, an Evaluation Toolkit, a Video on Befriending, and options for Research projects.

Financial Report: Kathryn Thomson, Treasurer, presented the Financial Report for 2002/03. This highlighted that income for was: 60% grants, 13% events, 11% membership fees, 8% consultancy, 8% other, while expenditure was: 56% salaries, 13% office, 11% Training Toolkit development, 6% events, 6% fees (accountants/consultants etc), other 7%.

Key changes in the year had been the new Community Fund support for the Information Service, the grant and related expenditure on the Training Toolkit, introducing consultancy as a means of income generation and increasing revenue from training events.

The outlook for the next year (2003/04) involves two main areas:

- i) ongoing management of position (grants (using existing grant arrangements), reserves (utilising reserves established from fee generation), one off projects (seeking funds for projects such as Toolkit), cost control (keeping closely to budgets).
- ii) strategic income generation – work in the Income Generation Sub Group to identify the most likely areas of work to gain funding support and looking at alterations to the membership fee structure

The accounts were presented to the members and approved.

Election of Board Members: In accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Befriending Network (Scotland), all Appointed Directors stood down, as did 50% of Member Directors. Carole particularly thanked Sandra McMurtrie, Joe Pearson, Tony Stevenson, Diane Sutherland-Lockhart and Kathleen White for their contributions to the Board in recent years as they were not standing for re-election. Nominations had been received for Member Director vacancies and the following people were elected to the Board: Claire Binnie (Fresh Start), Rosemary Cameron (Carers Befriending Project), Sheila Campbell (Argyll & Bute Childrens Befriending Project), Jim Leary (SoLVE) and Joette Thomas (Saheliya).

Afternoon Workshops

Each of the workshops lasted 90 minutes and were attended by participants representing a wide range of befriending projects.

Workshop A: Evaluation and Self-esteem – discussion and practice:

Discuss the implementation of ideas to assist in evaluating changes to self-esteem

Workshop facilitator: Christine Hutchings, Midlothian Befriending Project

This 90-minute workshop explored self esteem issues for befriending projects and discussed the means of measuring the impact of self-esteem.

By the end of the session participants had:

- Defined self esteem
- Considered common self esteem issues for their client group
- Reflected on their experience of seeing a link between befriending and improving self esteem
- Reflected on the evidence that they have at their projects that befriending has a positive effect on self esteem
- Considered evaluation methods that they could use to track changes to self esteem

and had explored answers to the following questions:

- 1) Recap from morning - How was self esteem defined by Cathy Richards
- 2) From your experience, what are the common self-esteem issues that people have at the point of referral?
- 3) Given what Cathy said about the link between befriending and self esteem, does your project claim a connection between befriending and improvements to self esteem?
- 4) What evidence has your project got that people's self-esteem has improved as a result of befriending?
- 5) What can your projects apply from Charlie Murphy's evaluation suggestions?

The Workshop concluded that self esteem couldn't be measured easily and that measurement should be qualitative, not quantitative.

Workshop B: Mental Health Befriending – self-esteem issues:

Discuss the self-esteem issues that mental health projects typically encounter

Workshop facilitator: Lesley Wilson, Women Supporting Women

The aim of this workshop was to explore self-esteem issues that arise in mental health projects. By splitting up into groups, participants were able to discuss the morning's talks during five workshop sessions which resulted in the collation of the following lists:

1) Recap from morning – how was self-esteem defined by Cathy Richards?

Past experiences:

- VAW /CSA
- Lack of support / isolation / type of support & networks. Family issues

- Daily / current situation
- Needs being met / or not
- Expectations
- Having a role in life
- Strategies / coping
- Lack of info
- Not knowing where to go

2) *From past experience of working with people with mental health problems, what are the common self-esteem issues that these people have at the point of referral?*

- Spectrum of mental health problems will affect self-esteem
- Losing place in society – stigma with mental health issues
- Issues of drug use mixing with mental health affecting self-esteem / networks of support needed

3) *Given what Cathy said about the link between befriending and self-esteem, can mental health befriending projects claim a connection between their work and improvements to self-esteem ?*

- You can't as we don't live in a vacuum
- Can be a catalyst for change / hard to pin down measurable impact / gut feeling
- Role of volunteers who have had mental health problems
- First step back to work
- Identifying, perceptions may not agree consistency important
- Helps carer of person with challenging behaviour

4) *What evidence have projects had that people with mental health problems have experienced improved self-esteem as a result of befriending?*

- Visual evidence – they look happier
- Building trust – modelling
- Task-based matching e.g. taikwondo / visiting the dentist
- Soft indicators
- Goal-setting
- People carry forward to become volunteers
- Friendships continuing outwith befriending
- If it works, don't fix it
- When they leave! Education / employment / training
- Issues of men becoming volunteers and rousing their self-esteem to do a job

5) *What can projects working with people with mental health problems apply from Charlie Murphy's evaluation suggestions?*

- Focus group (befrienders)
- Review scales
- External consultant
- Concerns about impact of what is said

- The funders needed to change (more than one way – each funder different)
- Not enough on paper don't keep it in your head
- Service reviews
- Using drama (young people's evaluation)

Workshop C: Self-esteem issues in befriending and young people:

Workshop facilitators: Colette Gallagher, COVEY and Silke Bryce, COVEY

Discuss the self-esteem issues that children and young people's befriending projects typically encounter

The aim of this workshop was to explore self-esteem issues for young people, their link with befriending and the means of proving success. By splitting up into groups, participants were able to discuss the morning's talks during three workshop sessions which resulted in the collation of the following lists:

1. *Definitions of self-esteem and common self-esteem issues: from your own experiences of working with young people, what are the common self-esteem issues that young people have at the start of a referral? What are their feelings; what are their symptoms?*

Isolation; feeling different and frightened of being labelled; feeling/being stigmatised; low self confidence; lack of appropriate role models; low self worth; lack of respect; anger; nonchalance – pretending they don't care; no or few friends; bullying; truancy; physical symptoms might include eating disorders and self harm; poor presentation of self – not washing hair etc; not having the confidence to try things; lack of support; lack of security; finding it difficult to disentangle cause and effect

2. *Can you claim a link between your work and self-esteem? What evidence do you have and how can you prove it?*

Before compiling evidence/a list of proof, participants:

- Discussed their unease at claiming sole responsibility for success
- Reflected on the statistical/quantitative vs the qualitative needs of an evaluation
- Commented on the problems caused by the befriending/counselling overlap
- Highlighted the different set of problems caused by befriending relationships whose aims are to offer respite

The importance of passing on methods that bring about self-esteem was highlighted by the session. Pegs Bailey also mentioned an evaluation report done by Big Brothers and Sisters in America which contains some useful tips, insights and statistics on mentoring and evaluating success in young people (www.bigbrothersbigsisters.org). Their statistics suggests that: 52% of young people with a 'big brother' or 'sister' are less likely to miss school; 46% are less likely to start using drugs; 37% less likely to lie to their parents. Participants suggested that the following factors indicated success:

Gaining a positive outlook; taking responsibility for themselves and for others; becoming more involved with peers; gaining respect for themselves and for others;

being able to stand up for themselves (against discrimination for instance); being able to make decisions; looking forward to things; planning for the future.

3. *Evaluation methods that they could use to track changes to self-esteem: what can young people's projects apply from Charlie Murphy's evaluation suggestions?*

In addition to the problems already highlighted during the morning's sessions, participants mentioned the problem of 'form-filling' and the fact that it wasn't what befrienders had signed up for. Participants pulled together the following list of methods that might be useful in tracking changes to self-esteem:

Pictorial evaluation; keeping a diary to express feelings; keeping a scrapbook (avoiding the 'effort' of having to write things down); collage; non verbal methods and scales (from a frowny/sad face to a smiley face); checklists and tickboxes

The session concluded that it was essential that expectations of the evaluation process were made clear from the start and emphasised that effective training was needed to ensure success.

Workshop D: Training befrienders about self-esteem:

Discuss ways that projects can raise their volunteers' awareness of self-esteem

Workshop facilitator: Elaine Smith, Volunteer Centre, East Dunbartonshire Befriending Project

This workshop discussed ways in which volunteers can raise awareness of self-esteem in befriendees, befrienders as well as in themselves. The workshop was divided up into five practical discussions and ended with a session requiring participants to devise a training session in self-esteem.

1) *Recap from the morning: how was self-esteem defined by Cathy Richards?*

Participants reflected on the morning's talk and pulled together the following points as a recap:

- Cathy's talk explored the different ideas; ways of assessing and mentoring in defining and measuring self-esteem in young people
- Encouraged us to find creative ways to measure effectiveness for instance in people with learning difficulties
- It reminded us that it is possible to over-emphasise the positive (surprising to learn you can do this)
- It emphasised that we often do not have a precise definition of self-esteem or know what it means. This needs to be unravelled in training
- Self-esteem affects befrienders, befriendees *and* staff! All need at some point to improve their self-esteem

(2) *What the most common self-esteem issues are for people at your befriending project?*

Most client groups (regardless of area, age etc) have very similar problems and reasons for self-esteem issues. It was possible to divide self-esteem issues into three areas:

- *Client self-esteem* (most clients feel a sense of worthlessness; find it hard to admit to needing help; feel a lack of self worth which can be reinforced by parent/carer undermining any work done; isolation; loneliness; have difficulty coping; find it difficult to deal with problems)

- *Befriender self-esteem* (questions which arise here are typically, ‘am I doing any good?’ These feelings are exacerbated by a lack of support and supervision and a lack of developmental training)
- *Staff self-esteem* (which is affected by worries such as losing volunteers and self doubt about whether skills are good enough.)

(3) Teaching befrienders: what do you want your volunteers to understand about their befriender's self-esteem?

There are two issues here: asking why befrienders might typically have low self-esteem and supporting volunteers with tips and guidance on issues such as what not to do (e.g. argue); how to engage in activities; how they can build on successes; how they can keep a sense of control. Participants suggested that the following were important tips to pass on to volunteers:

- That it was not necessary to see a ‘massive change’; that it was important to keep sight of the distance travelled; that just accepting a befriending service was a positive step; that it was worth preparing for possible disappointment (that nothing may happen); that it was important to recognise people’s different backgrounds and behaviours because of their low self-esteem; that it was important to accept people’s standards. It was also worth reminding volunteers that they may never hear thank you because their befriender may not know how to say it.
- Methods that can be adopted: experimentation; repetition; keep things simple
- Examples of knock-on effects for clients might be: doing things themselves; might not need support/service any more; achieving set aims/targets; gradual withdrawal of service; improved health; self-reliance

(4) Do you have a current training session where this topic would best fit?

There are two issues here: deciding which training session self-esteem best fits into and deciding how much time you would spend on it.

- Participants suggested that self-esteem best fits with training sessions on: what a befriender might get back; a ‘their world’ session; values and attitudes; a training session on what the small indicators are to improving self-esteem; support and supervision.
- Participants suggested that training might not work as a whole session and might work better peppered throughout or as a refresher course; it might help in the development of assessments; strengths of a child might work better as a separate session; training might perhaps be better used when matched.

(5) What activities could be included in training?

- The following activities were suggested: case studies; scenarios; using existing volunteers and client groups; using motivational information; feedback; using simple models e.g. cognitive therapy; role play; identify boundaries (e.g. that befriending is not counselling etc).

- The content of a training session on self-esteem might be:

What is self-esteem

What are the factors that affect self-esteem

What is your experience of self-esteem being affected by different circumstances

Why might befriended in project have low self-esteem

Why might befriending affect self-esteem

If someone's self-esteem improves, what might the knock-on effects be?

6) Three different training sessions

Participants were divided into three groups and asked to devise training sessions in self-esteem.

Group One's Training Session:

- 1) What is self-esteem: brainstorm ideas
- 2) Definition: arrive at a definition of self-esteem
- 3) Identify self e.g. list 5 things you're good at or list things you've don't that you're proud of
- 4) What is low self-esteem: brainstorm ideas
- 5) Recognising your role in improving self-esteem

Group Two's Training Session:

- 1) Introduction to self-esteem
Exercise: pictorial illustrations to explore self-esteem issues, discussion etc
- 2) Cognitive behavioural model based on today's information
- 3) The befrienders role in practice
- 4) Examples of good practice – practical dos and don'ts

Group Three's Training Session:

- 1) Need to know aims/objectives – what should people be doing?
- 2) Establish what self-esteem is: adapt handouts; customise training and tailor to specific needs
- 3) What are the signs of low self-esteem; identify needs of individual. What motivates your volunteers?
- 4) How can this be practically applied: look at goals; look at expectations; look at listening/communication skills
- 5) Pepper training throughout the course. Must be rooted in reality and kept simple
- 6) Produce artwork of before and after: how befriending helps

Workshop E: Library Roadshow

Conference delegates were invited to browse through the BN(S) documentation library and request copies of materials.

The 2003/4 Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday, October 7th 2004! We hope to see you there!