

# BN(S) Conference and AGM 2006: Befriending - The Way Forward

## Conference Notes

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Eighty delegates attended the BN(S) annual conference and AGM held on 6 October 2006 at Stirling's Tolbooth, representing projects from all over the UK for a day of information, discussion, innovation showcasing and networking around the theme *Befriending: The Way Forward*. The morning explored how befriending projects fit in with current government policies, looked at the Big Lottery Fund's new investment themes, learnt what evidence funders want to see to know that their money has been well spent, saw five befriending projects receive their Approved Provider Standard awards and looked at present and potential new partnership initiatives that fit well with the aims of befriending. The AGM looked back over the year and towards the main aims for the period 2006/7 and the afternoon offered delegates a showcase of innovative work being done by befriending projects throughout Scotland.

Split into five presentations, three discussions, the AGM/Accounts and three innovations showcases, Joette Thomas, Board Member and Consultant, chaired the day.

The following notes cover the content of the day:

### 1) BEING PART OF THE BIGGER PICTURE:

*How do befriending projects fit in with current government policies? Do they guide us on the way forward or create obstacles for us to try and work round?*

#### 1. Powerpoint presentation by Mike Nicholson, Development Manager, BN(S):

- Eight and half years ago, a fledgling Befriending Network (Scotland) was concentrating its efforts on trying to establish a network, formalise support for projects, work with projects to improve practice within befriending, look at raising the profile of befriending. The language of social inclusion had just appeared and the title of the 1998 conference, *To Boldly Go*, looked towards taking befriending positively towards a new millennium. The network had high hopes of recognition as social inclusion was surely what befriending projects were about ...

Since 1998, the network has strengthened / stabilised into an average annual figure of 250 members. Services have been established at BN(S) (information officer, training officer etc) and the network has developed income-generating streams to improve its sustainability. There has been an observed rise in interest in mentoring & an improved understanding of links and developed partnerships. Funders have taken an interest and befriending is now recognised in some government policy documents.

- But has the drive for social inclusion seen the rise of befriending? Is befriending any more recognised by policy makers and funders? There are some signs of progress in the wider picture but there is no doubt that befriending could do better at gaining recognition.
- Since 1997, the government has developed contemporary social policy around the ideals of social inclusion. The Social Exclusion Unit describes social exclusion as the

'short hand for what can happen when people or areas are suffering from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown'. The shift to social inclusion policy is a response to the need to prevent individuals at risk of exclusion from becoming excluded : a need the SEU proposes to address by e.g. resolving to reverse the growth in family breakups, teenage pregnancies and crime, and to reduce possible restrictions to an individual's 'economic opportunity'.

- Social inclusion seemed to speak the right language but actually had strong links to employability and crime reduction and ultimately to poverty. Social inclusion as befriending projects generally describe it (i.e. about relationships) was marginalised / at risk of being seen as a non-essential luxury.
- Over time, however, there has been some growth in awareness of value of relationships to health, community connections from research / projects' experience – this is beginning to be reflected in national policies or strategies and there have been specific mentions of befriending across the client groups e.g.

### **Learning Disabilities:**

Recommendation 17: The Scottish Executive should consider raising, with the Department of Social Security, specific areas of concern related to benefits and support for people with learning disabilities.

37. A better approach would be for people to mix with others of their own age and interests in the community. If these links do not exist at the moment, agencies need to encourage and develop them. Befriending schemes can help with this. People with learning disabilities need to be involved in activities enjoyed by the public generally. They need to use public facilities more alongside non-disabled people, with less segregated sessions, events, shows and activities. In reviewing their day care opportunities local authorities should consider developing befriending schemes and links with other community groups.

From *The Same As You? Review of Services 2000*

### **Homelessness:**

The strength of a homeless person's social networks should be an integral part of the assessment of their needs and of the support offered to them in temporary accommodation and during permanent resettlement. All projects serving homeless people should pursue strategies to promote and support opportunities for positive social interaction.

(56) A national co-ordination role should be created to build and co-ordinate local mediation, befriending and mentoring services for homeless people across Scotland. This role would also evaluate existing projects, disseminate good practice and facilitate information sharing.

From *Guidance on Homelessness Strategies - March 2002*

## **Children:**

Community networking models and volunteer befriending schemes:

Principles of enhancing informal support: traditionally, most interventions have relied on specialist or professional input to children, parents or families. Increasingly strategies are being used to strengthen the help and advice available to families informally, whether from their kin, neighbour and friendship networks or through linking families with a volunteer. Such help may be less expert than professional services, but it is often more acceptable, more flexible and more available.

From *Growing Support - A Review of Services for Vulnerable Families with Young Children (0-3) (2003)(appendix C )*

## **Children & Young People:**

1) National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being: four key aims for 2003-2006 include:

Key Aim No. 4 - Promoting and Supporting Recovery: Supporting people who have experienced mental ill-health into mainstream life; to have a network of social and personal support; to have access to good housing; to help in ensuring that people with mental health problems can both access and retain employment, significantly aids people's recovery from mental ill-health.

Although there are many factors which are well established as increasing children's vulnerability to mental health problems, there are also many protective factors which need to be considered and supported. These include an individual child's attributes, their relationships with a range of others including their families and their peers, and the availability of support networks such as befriending schemes."

From *The Mental Health of Children and Young People: A Framework for Promotion, Prevention and Care*, 2005 (p46, 7.6)

2) Ministers have agreed a high-level vision for the children and young people of Scotland:

"In order to become confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens, all Scotland's children need to be: safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, included, respected and responsible"

From *For Scotland's Children* report

### **Care Leavers:**

Each of the 1 million children in Scotland is engaged on a journey from birth to adulthood. By its end the child should have realised his/her potential in terms of emotional and social maturity, be in good health, and have attained a level of academic achievement and other skills. Some children lose their way on their journey. This may be because the child is a victim, or the child may have drawn attention to him or herself in some way. He/she may be struggling because of disability or illness (including, increasingly, psychiatric illness) or being a carer, or because the parents are unable to meet their responsibilities: increasingly commonly because they are drug-users.

- Informal services provide a very significant element within the network of children's services.
- Many informal services have had considerable success in reaching families, children and teenagers who have been difficult to engage in mainstream services.
- As well as providing formal services, leaders of children's services should identify the informal services provided within the area and ensure that sufficient open-access services are provided to meet local requirements. Voluntary organisations can be key partners in such services
- "We aim to improve and develop the services provided for those leaving care to ensure that services, including mentoring and befriending, continue to be available beyond the age of 16."

From Scottish Executive website / Leaving Care

### **Asylum Seekers:**

There were missed opportunities such as...the possibility of promoting the development of friendship through befriending services...

...Many asylum seekers experience isolation and a better provision of befriending services might start to address this....

...Befriending services also require further consideration for their potential positive contribution to communication, integration and wellbeing.

From *Asylum Seekers in Scotland* (2003)

### **Older People:**

Older persons should have access to social and legal services to enhance their autonomy, protection and care.

Older persons should be able to pursue opportunities for the full development of their potential.

Older persons should have access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society

Older persons should be treated fairly regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, disability or other status, and be valued independently of their economic contribution.

*From 4 of the 18 principles of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons*

In summary:

- Funders *have* been supportive of befriending projects – e.g. Laidlaw Youth Project – a new funder set up by Scottish multi-millionaire, Irvine Laidlaw 3 years ago, has responded well to the inclusion of befriending projects
- May 06 / Big Lottery Fund in Scotland: 2 out of 4 Investment Themes (Life Transitions and Supporting 21st Century Living) specifically name befriending and mentoring as examples of projects that fit the theme
- Home Office supported Mentoring and Befriending Foundation in England to provide leadership, standards and awareness
- In policy terms, befriending is occasionally mentioned by name, but also by related terms which gives great opportunities for projects to align themselves with policy (but still retain their ethos). Projects need to be at least ‘in tune’ with what is happening, although better still, be contributing to setting the agenda
- There are funders interested in befriending but competition is strong and there is a demand for evidence
- What should projects do?
  - Keep up-to-date with / influence policies
  - Improve ways of evaluating and showing the impact of relationships on people’s health, outlook, wider relationships and activities
- What should BN(S) do...
  - Keep up-to-date with / influence policies
  - Disseminate information to local projects
  - Assist projects with evaluation (see Evaluation Toolkit for more help here)
  - Continue gathering case studies of projects who have found opportunities from linking their work with policy

## **2. A LOCAL PROJECT BEING PART OF THE BIGGER PICTURE**

**Susan Gilchrist (BNS Training Officer) interviewed Andrew Findlay of Interest Link, Borders, a project that linked in with national policy to good effect:**

- *Andrew could you just start us off by telling us a little bit about where you are based and the work that Interest Link do:*  
Interest Link is based in different locations around the Borders and links adults (aged 16+) with learning disabilities one-to-one with volunteers to do things they both enjoy.

The aim is to improve the quality of life of the service users, and enable them to participate in the community.

- *So what specifically was the policy that you managed to tap into and how did you do this?*

The policy we picked up on was The Scottish Executive's *The Same As You* and the thing of note was that we realised that the recommendations in it (together with their ringfenced funds) could trickle down to a local level. The Council was keen to hear about ideas for achieving goals such as day services specific to short breaks so we started lobbying in 2003. We didn't ask for full funding, just 20% of service.

- *You've managed to use policy to tap into local government but I understand you're now trying to do this at Scottish Executive level, can you tell me about that?*

The Scottish Executive has proven much harder to reach, partly because it talks about lots of related things to befriending but not befriending itself. With an organisation as large and as diverse as the SE, you're also up against lots of different hurdles e.g. you can invest a lot of time and effort building up a relationship with someone at the SE but when they move on to another job, their replacement might not know anything about befriending and you have to start all over again. This is what happened to us: we heard that they were doing a report on day services so we lobbied hard and also sent them a list of other similar projects working in the field to instil 'sector' feel. We put a considerable amount of time and efforts into helping the SE but when the report arrived, there was nothing on befriending. A change of personnel had meant that the new person responsible for putting the report together had overlooked befriending. We voiced our concerns over this and have been re-invited back to present.

- *What have the main challenges been?*  
Educating people about what we do, don't do and what befriending is & working out how to communicate our needs to the right audience.
- *If you were to give 3 pieces of advice to other projects on how to tap in to policy what would they be?*  
Keep repeating your mantra as it takes time for things to sink in; also, there are often no clear paths set up so you are the one who has to set up the path; watch out for the fact that personnel move & offices get restructured – all your hard work can be lost in one job move. And then there are all the small things: always make sure you've got all your facts, accounts, case studies etc at your fingertips: it's important to look organised. Remember, everything is consulted on now, so there are, in theory, paths out there where you can influence policy making & makers.

**3. DISCUSSION: Delegates took 15 minutes to discuss 5 questions on policy & befriending:**

*Question I. Are you aware of policy that might relate to the work that your project does? What is it?*

- “It’s important to know and understand how we fit in”
- “Relevant policies are difficult to find: befriending isn’t an actual term that crops up and it’s impossible to sift through everything that relates to it”
- “There is a major consideration we need to make as a sector: are we wanting to promote befriending as a core/mainstream service? That is what this discussion about having to fit in with policy implies. It would seem we need to have the debate about whether we are a core service first.”
- “Lots of policy areas covered by befriending’s client groups: children service plans, youth justice & offending, mental health, social inclusion, volunteering strategy”
- “Management committees can be a good source for lobbying and keeping abreast of policy change BUT they also have time pressures”
- “We’re aware of policy because:
  - a) We’re funded by local SIP who’s priorities are based on policy
  - b) We attend strategy group meetings at a local level
  - c) We’ve attended a Consultation at national level
  - d) We’ve got local councillor support”
- “We’re a bit vague about policy as:
  - a) We’re service-user led not policy led
  - b) Our time is taken up with day-to-day running of project – we don’t always have time to read
  - c) Most project’s line managers are managing other services that aren’t specifically linked to befriending so would not have time or background knowledge to specialise in befriending policy
  - d) We are managed by the council and have less decision-making autonomy than other projects so feel policy belongs to a different level to the one we’re working at
  - e) We are managed by the Council who are always demanding statistics from us to evaluate what we’re doing. Proposals we then put to them are often turned down.”
- “We wouldn’t want to restructure our project just to fit in with policy”
- “Needs to be checks and balances in system as policy can compartmentalise & can also tie you down to achieving certain things: we need to keep befriending as autonomous and flexible as possible”
- “The best place to look for policy seems to be the internet but I don’t always have access to the net”

*Question II. If it is not in your job remit to be informed about policy, does someone else in your organisation have responsibility for this? Who?*

- Service Manager

- Management Committee
- Council (as we're Council funded)

*Question III. How did you or might you become informed and stay up-to-date with both local and national policy which affects your work?*

- Internet
- Identify an umbrella body (e.g. Help the Aged) which is large and aware
- BN(S)
- Networking with others and becoming visible
- Attending/sitting on local forums
- Publications e.g. *Third Force News* & subscriptions to voluntary action bulletins
- Conferences

*Question IV. In what ways do you think BN(S) could help keep members informed about policy?*

- Divide membership into focus discussion groups
- Set up meetings targeting specific areas e.g. policies for older people, mental health etc
- Alert membership to policy changes e.g. email bulletins
- Website – both written info and set up policy discussion chat room
- *Net Gain*
- Sending out executive summaries to membership e.g. on email
- Writing resource sheets but keep info short & sharp
- BN(S) to work alongside projects making submissions to ensure a clear message is communicated
- One problem is that national policy can be interpreted differently especially at local level

*Question V. Do you think BN(S) has a role to play in influencing or shaping policy? How might they do this?*

- Operate, network & be visible at a national (e.g. Scot Exec) level
- Get involved in national-level consultations
- Identify links between policy and funding granted
- Co-ordinate any meaningful grassroots consultation
- Make sure befriending gets a mention
- We need our profile raised too
- It would be good for BN(S) to look into what befriending's unmet need is – perhaps count up numbers on project waiting lists?
- It would be good for BN(S) to disseminate phrases to use/not use in funding applications

**4. TALKING A GOOD GAME: the conference then heard from Jo Kennedy (writer of the new Evaluation Resource Pack for befriending and mentoring projects) who had interviewed representatives of major funders in Scotland about the evidence they want to know that their money has been well spent:**

**Powerpoint presentation, What Do Funders Want?**

*What they **don't** want:*

- Activity rather than outcome report
- Total reliance on case studies
- People to measure everything
- Statements like, 'We just know...'
- Long descriptive reports
- Use of language without really understanding what it means

*What they **do** want:*

- Honesty
- Individual conversations
- Projects to understand the value of doing evaluation for themselves as well as for funders ie. Evidence that projects are learning from their practice
- Evidence that you have achieved what you set out to achieve - to see the difference you make to people
- Developing 'good evaluation habits from the start'
- Some funders like self-assessment scales; some don't: get your pitch right – don't just copy and paste from other applications
- Soft as well as hard outcomes - quantitative and qualitative
- Some funders like creative methods of gathering information eg. storybooks, DVDs
- Evidence of partnership working (it avoids duplication)
- Demonstration of how you 'add value'

*What hope is out there?*

- Funders realise it is difficult
- They are trying to make it easier
  - i. By getting together to start matching up their procedures
  - ii. By providing resources eg. Training, information booklets and the Evaluation Resource Pack:

*The Evaluation Resource Pack:*

- Enables projects to undertake their own monitoring and evaluation
- Includes basic definitions
- Includes lots of real examples
- Practical tips, tough questions and useful resources
- Sample templates
- Defining the difference we want to make (setting outcomes)
- Deciding how we will know when it is different (matching outcomes with outcome indicators)
- Gathering evidence

- Analysing evidence and learning from evaluation
- Writing reports

If you have not got your copy yet of this free resource, contact BN(S) on 0131 225 6156 or email [info@befriending.co.uk](mailto:info@befriending.co.uk) and a copy will be sent out to you. Whilst you're waiting for it to arrive, you can download it as a .pdf from [www.befriending.co.uk](http://www.befriending.co.uk).

## 5) Annual General Meeting

Please contact the BN(S) office for a copy of the AGM minutes. The minutes from the conference will also be presented at next year's AGM. The Annual Report and Financial Report from the AGM are summarised here:

### Annual Report 2005/6:

#### *The picture:*

- 250 member projects
- 75% in Scotland
- Other members in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland
- The membership represents a great diversity of client groups and befriending approaches
- BN(S) works with non-members e.g. two thirds of enquiries are from outwith the membership and from organisations and individuals

#### *The challenge:*

- Getting the right services and support that :
- *relate to the diversity of client groups supported*
- *recognise the diversity of projects' methods*
- *account for the range of experience of staff*

#### *BN(S) also needs to:*

- Ensure that time is spent on the bigger picture

#### *Services offered to membership:*

- Delivered 14 training events (*new formats*)
- Facilitated 24 regional networking meetings (*Common Ground*)
- Organised a national conference on the role of befriending projects in improving independence
- Produced 1/4ly newsletters for befriending project staff (*NetGain*) and for their befrienders (*The Befriender*)
- Produced a CD Directory of Befriending Projects
- Delivered consultancy reports, evaluations, feasibility studies
- Handled over 500 enquiries seeking information on local befriending projects or on practice issues in managing befriending projects.

#### *Developments – the bigger picture:*

- Published the research report on 'The Nature and Extent of Befriending and Mentoring in Scotland'

- Began the promotion of the ‘Approved Provider Standards’ (quality awards scheme) for befriending and mentoring projects to improve practice in the sector1
- Commissioned consultants to write an Evaluation Resource Pack for Befriending and Mentoring projects (*partnership with the Scottish Mentoring Network and Mentoring and Befriending Foundation and Evaluation Support Scotland*)

*Behind the scenes:*

Thanks to: Staff, Board (and Office Bearers) and Members who make up the network and make it worth being part of

**Financial Report:** summarised accounts information can be found on the Annual Report 2005/6. Please contact Befriending Network Scotland if you would like a full set of accounts.

**Board Elections:** Following the Board elections which saw current members re-appointed and the new appointment of Christi Guest from first hand, Sheila Campbell and Melanie Lambert two current Board members, revealed to the conference what being a Board member was like to try and persuade members to put themselves up for election at next year’s conference:

Sheila: “I attend eight meetings a year and like the fact that the Board represents a great diversity of people, client groups, size of project & geographical location. One of the things that satisfies me most is being able to watch ideas develop e.g. in January 2004, we first talked about getting some money for a Training Officer: look at where we are now; in August 2004, we were invited to work with Scottish Mentoring Network, again, look at where we are now; in August 2005, we first discussed the Approved Provider Standards, again, look at where we are now ...”

Melanie: “I’ve been on the Board for 2 years and joined because of the valuable support given to me by BN(S) in the past. Each Board meeting is a really creative place to be: lots of problem-solving, helping to set up good practice and working out solutions to befriending and funding issues. Also, each meeting runs to time! I have been, and continue to be really impressed by the way BN(S)’ core values remain unchanged: to support befriending projects, to promote befriending and to support befriending staff ...”

**6. PARTNERSHIPS THAT WORK FOR ALL: *who can befriending projects work constructively with? After a year of joint initiatives, Scott Telfer (National Development Manager of the Scottish Mentoring Network) presented information on the Approved Provider Standards - national accreditation for mentoring and befriending schemes developed by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation***

*Why have a quality standard?*

- The Approved Provider Standard is defined as: “a national benchmark for safe and competent practice in voluntary one-to-one mentoring and befriending”

*Its origins:*

- A response to big growth in mentoring & befriending
- Government recognition that safe and competent practice should have a national benchmark
- It signposts secure schemes for potential volunteers, service users and funding providers
- It offers a framework to share good practice

*What makes APS a credible award?*

- Officially recognised and supported by the Home Office and Dept for Education and Skills and by other funding agencies
- In Scotland this work is being supported by the Scottish Executive
- APS reflects proven good practice of successful schemes
- BNS assisted in transition from APS being mentoring-only to befriending
- APS is the only quality standard designed specifically for mentoring and befriending projects

*Achieving APS is FREE !*

- APS is open to all voluntary one-to-one befriending schemes of any size
- BNS will provide free individual guidance and support during the preparation of applications
- The assessment process is also free

*What impact is APS making?*

- Since launch in 2001 over 400 schemes accredited
- Well over 10,000 volunteers and clients now operating within the APS framework
- Further 150 schemes have registered for APS and are preparing applications
- Over 80% of Approved Providers now seeking re-accreditation reported they are still operating and many continue to grow
- BNS and SMN aiming to have 30-40 projects in Scotland accredited by March 2007

*What successful schemes have said about APS:*

- “Preparing your application makes you review all your policies and procedures and highlights any gaps”
- “At the end of it you have an independent check that you’re doing all the right things.”
- “I wish we’d used the APS framework when setting up our project – it shows you what you need to put in place.”

### *Eligibility Checklist*

- Your scheme must involve mainly one-to-one befriending (some group support can be accommodated)
- APS is open to all schemes using volunteers
- Your scheme must demonstrate that it has involvement in all aspects of the befriending relationship
- Your scheme has completed at least one cycle of the befriending relationship – typically a minimum of one year
- Your scheme has generated working documentation to validate that all appropriate procedures are in place and operating

### *Accreditation policy*

- Applications should be submitted for individual schemes
- Schemes from the same organisation but with different aims and client groups will need to apply individually
- For national and multi-region schemes we will agree with the parent organisation what information is required in addition to standard policies and procedures to validate local practice
- Accreditation is valid for 3 years – successful schemes receive a certificate and APS logo for publicity purposes

### *What does APS cover?*

- Five key management and operational areas are assessed:
  - i. Project aims and structure
  - ii. Client group
  - iii. Recruitment & selection of volunteers
  - iv. Volunteer preparation and training
  - v. Monitoring & evaluation

### *Assessment Process*

- Desk-top assessment is made of a portfolio of information and evidence supplied
- Three categories of assessment rating:
  - i. Approved
  - ii. Conditional (specific guidance from assessor)
  - iii. Not Approved
- Approx 70% of applications pass “first time”

**Any project interested in taking part in APS should contact Befriending Network Scotland.**

Following this presentation 5 projects were presented with the APS award: COVEY, Home Link Family Support, INtegr8 Befriending Service, South Ayrshire Befriending Project, Stirling and District Association for Mental Health Young Persons' Project.

**6. BIG LOTTERY FUND – Mike Nicholson presented information on BNS plans to apply for lottery funding to support the infrastructure for befriending in Scotland.**

*The Way Forward*

- Work underway on a Big Lottery Fund application, entitled: ‘National Infrastructure for Befriending’
- Outline Proposal submitted under ‘Dynamic Inclusive Communities’
- Proposal accepted and BNS now invited to submit full application
- Initial work undertaken on full application is involving BNS staff, Board and Scottish Business in the Community
- Timescale: submission by end October

*Theme of the Application*

- Like many of our members, BN(S) wants to carry on doing what it’s doing...and where appropriate, develop new work
- The overall theme of the application is therefore:
  - i. Current services – improving them
  - ii. Developments
    - a. identified by BN(S)
    - b. identified by members

*Draft Outcomes (to be revised)*

- Support new befriending project to maximise their potential and ensure wider reaching services
- Improve projects’ practice through programmes of networking, training and conference events
- Ensure equal access for all to information on befriending (written resources, directory of contacts and web-based material)
- Evaluate befriending projects throughout Scotland against a set of best practice standards through a quality awards scheme
- Provide access for befriending projects throughout Scotland to their own consultancy services

*Challenges: the ongoing challenge for BN(S) :*

- to generate income, BNS needs projects to have budgets\* for the type of support services BNS offers (\*put them in your applications!)
- we have to balance income generating activities, while providing affordable services to projects (whose funding may be insecure)
- without a direct client group BNS has access to some different funders than local projects do / but less of them
- to meet that challenge we want to consult members on the support and services they feel they need in their work

**7. DISCUSSION: delegates delegates were given fifteen minutes to respond to the BN(S) Big Lottery application and make suggestions for what they would like to see:**

**Training**

- Develop in-house training to project workers especially on what training methods to use and how to revamp training programmes

- More core training and/or a continuous rollover of core training for new projects/project workers
- Set up mentoring/work shadowing system amongst project workers
- Facilitate strategy day for projects
- A longer training schedule so that workers can build a portfolio of learning
- Co-ordinate a system where local projects are grouped together to receive training
- Work in partnership with other organisations to ensure befriending has input of fresh ideas
- Training for volunteers
- Training bus to travel round the country
- Accreditation for training received
- Develop more flexible routes into training e.g. distance learning
- Would like the training programme a year ahead
- Would like peer meetings set up
- More training to support APS
- More training for more experienced staff – particularly now that projects are lasting longer
- Introduce video conferencing
- Training needed on policy & what makes a good funding application
- More links between consultancy & training – more tailormade training for projects would be good
- Develop a bank of training resources like a library that members could buy off the shelf
- Focused training on particular client groups
- Would like a training page on the website & more training resources on website
- Send training notes to all members – even those who've not attended
- Lone worker training
- Policy training: how to track down policy & make it work for your project
- Review Training Toolkit – could set up an editorial team of project staff to evaluate BN(S) training material

### **Consultancy**

- Develop generic software for evaluation and befriending project management
- Advice on business plans
- External supervision
- How is BN(S) consultancy quality assured: make this clearer
- If it was free, we'd use it for business planning, evaluations, grant applications, consult on project-specific issues e.g. do we need to register for Care Commission, help with strategic development of project

### **Information**

- Further develop the website e.g. more best practice information
- More policy information on website and in *Net Gain*. Perhaps set up policy resource sheets? A policy information service
- Targeted email updates
- Discussion board or chat room on website – good paths to augment Common Ground meetings
- Develop an internet library

- Develop electronic resources that members could buy/get access to off the shelf and adapt them to suit their project
- Set up a database of funders (with their deadlines as well as who's applied, what's been granted, what evaluation requirements are)
- Profile new funders
- More information on related topics to 1:1 befriending e.g. peer befriending, telephone befriending
- More information for befrienders – perhaps a befrienders webpage? A good tie-in with *The Befriender*. Nothing else out there for volunteers at a national level.
- More links to other national bodies & what info they've got

### **Development**

- How do management committees fit into broader context of befriending projects

## **8. INNOVATIONS SHOWCASE: four different befriending projects spoke about recent initiatives, revealing fascinating and humbling insights into the unique ways they are supporting their particular client groups**

### **I. Pauline Livingstone, Cowal Elderly Befriending Scheme: responding to waiting list and volunteer recruitment pressures by setting up new initiatives**

Cowal started off nine years ago as a Council pilot in response to demand – there was nothing for the elderly (despite one of the highest elderly populations in Scotland) & not many volunteering opportunities in the area. Despite strong level of local support, funding was difficult to get, so Cowal targeted befriending *and* volunteering opportunity angles. Because of demand, the waiting list became huge and it became necessary to think of ways to manage the list, to attract more volunteers (and not just for 1:1 befriending) & to keep volunteers once a match ends (e.g. a person moves into care). To attract and keep volunteers, different volunteering roles were offered: e.g. being a volunteer driver, taking groups of 2 or 3 out for a coffee. These roles sometimes lead to 1:1 befriending. People who don't normally volunteer are targeted. Waiting list remains a problem: loneliness comes in lots of different forms: need for some company, something different to do, just to get out. Started looking for lots of different funding e.g. Better Neighbourhoods funding because of deprived wards. Initiatives we have developed:

- Consolidated our core 1:1 befriending programme
- Peer befriending – volunteer driver takes people to each other's houses but doesn't do the befriending themselves
- Old Friends Club – help old friends stay in touch who otherwise can't
- Out & About bus: 1200+ outings and over 12,000 miles
- Lunch Club: 18-20 people for lunch each week
- Christmas concert
- Information Pop-In Service: leaflets covering lots of different information for elderly people, their carers and for other organisations
- Keep in Touch Service: lots of our clients have very scattered families so we've set up an email service where they can email family through an office email address and get help sending and downloading photos.
- Elderly Men/Sport: set up a new-age curling group (adapted indoor curling for disabled people)).

- Hospital Support Service: volunteers accompany clients to hospital, take notes, and then take them home again
- Paths to Help Group for people with dementia – activities set up for people with dementia who are still physically active

## **II. Clare Taylor, Integr8: Empowering young people in 3-year project review**

INtegr8INtegr8 is a West Lothian befriending project working with teenagers with mental health difficulties. Set up 3 years ago, the project decided to consult its young people as part of its 3-year review and evaluation process. Focus group sessions were incorporated into summer residentials in the Highlands and various creative, fun activities were used to enable young people to express themselves as safely and easily as possible. The result of the weekend away is fabulous 71-page report, full of photos & direct insights into the impact befriending is having on young people's lives: "there have been a lot of changes since I started working with Heather. Everything always went downhill, but now things are starting to look up. I used to be a really angry person, the slightest wee thing would set me off, and people annoyed me, now I'm not so bothered. Befriending changed my life ... if it weren't for the Youth Action Project, I would probably be in jail or heading for jail."

Some discussion comments from delegates on the report:

- "Gives a very real sense of the culture of the project & the involvement of young people. Very powerful tool."
- "It's everything in a nutshell: a really useful resource which could be used in a variety of ways"
- "Feedback from young people innovative & great but they must have had funding to do this"

## **III. Lukas Lehman, Home Link: supporting volunteer career development with a dedicated Befriender Development Officer**

As part of its volunteer development strategy, Home Link decided to recruit a Befriender Development Officer to support volunteer career development. The project felt that it was important to keep volunteers on board and to make sure that they were given the right training, support and tools to continue developing with organisation – just as any member of staff would expect.

The new role means a trained professional with a separate budget and amount of time can link in with a volunteer but at a different level than a project worker e.g. knowing what people do for a living and seeing if they want to work out how volunteering might tie in with their CV development. The Befriender Development Officer can also help volunteers put together a portfolio to showcase achievements and pinpoint the skills used in befriending. The new role doesn't mean the project has to offer lots more new training, it just means that areas of interest are flagged up.

Although it has been difficult to find someone to do the role (just five hours a week), an appointment has now been made.

#### **IV. Mary Fisher and Julie Brown, Greater Easterhouse Alcohol and Drug Befriending Project: studying for and using COSCA counselling skills**

Greater Easterhouse Befriending Project work with people with drug and alcohol problems and their aim is to help their clients access social and leisure facilities and to give good quality volunteering opportunities to ex-service users & social care students wanting to work in the addiction field. The project decided to offer volunteers the opportunity to study for the first two modules of the COSCA Counselling Skills qualification:

##### **What is the COSCA Counselling Skills Certificate?**

- Provides a COSCA certificated 120 hour training programme in counseling skills
- Is normally delivered over 4 Modules of 30 hours each
- Can be accessed across Scotland via our expanding network of over 40
- COSCA Validated Training Providers
- Contains four strands: skills, knowledge, self-awareness and ethics
- Uses experiential learning .e.g students practise skills in groups of three
- Is mainly designed for people in helping or caring professions
- Helps the individuals who complete it to develop and apply counselling skills to non-counselling settings
- Gives a professionally recognised qualification in counselling skills
- Provides an excellent starting point for those who wish to train as a counsellor or psychotherapist

##### **What is the purpose of the COSCA Counselling Skills Certificate?**

There is a growing awareness that counselling skills can enhance performance in various inter-personal contexts that require people's voices to be heard including:

- Nursing, teaching and social work contexts
- Personnel work
- Welfare services
- Staff development appraisal
- Management relations

The project offered the course to volunteers because it teaches self awareness and good listening skills. People with addiction problems have a lot of shame and guilt – peer support can recognise this. Offering training to volunteers proven to be a volunteer magnet. The project employed an outside trainer who trains in-house. The results?

##### ***Julie Brown: from ex-service user to volunteer befriender & COSCA certified counsellor:***

“I’ve come a very long way. COSCA course has given me the confidence and self worth to feel that I have something to give back; something to show the client. Although it’s not necessarily counselling, it gives me the structure to help me

recognise things e.g. why people act in certain ways. Next step for me is into employment. In the past, I would never have considered working for free but it has been an invaluable stepping stone.”

**9. DISCUSSION: Delegates discussed the different innovations showcased and reflected on any innovations undertaken at their projects**

*Other initiatives introduced by projects:*

- Important to remember that not everyone wants one-to-one: develop service to include this e.g. at Interest Link, we've set up sports groups
- 'Transitions from befriender to befriendee' programme
- Extending home visiting to include visiting people in hospital/hospice AND extending befriending service to include visiting people in hospital whilst they're waiting to be linked
- Once-a-month activities
- Telephone befriending – have developed an at-home training pack:
  - For people who've moved away from the area
  - To attract housebound volunteers
  - To ensure problems are picked up quickly
  - To make effective use of volunteers time: one-to-one befriending is c. 3 hours a week; telephone befriending is 1 hour a week: one volunteer can have more than one match
  - Expenses: 5p per minute
- Inroads group for people on waiting list & for people who have befrienders: mixed success
- Set up a young person's committee
- Group volunteering
- Group events once a month for people on waiting list e.g. games afternoons (one project felt that group events were a backwards step for some client groups: group things tend to be what's offered in more institutional settings)
- Photographic exhibition: everyone involved in project brought in a favourite photo: it became a shared resource
- Distance befriending
- Does funding influence/restrict what projects can do?
- Befriender/befriender get-togethers
- Linking up/introducing matches
- Peer befriending
- Extending one-to-one to include siblings

*Volunteer Development Initiatives:*

- Preparation packs
- Monthly support evenings
- Variety of other training e.g. sign language, first aid, drug awareness, lifting & handling
- CV-building & volunteer development plans
- Provide references

- Some volunteers do the home-learning Lampeter course
- Link up with other local organisations to offer related training and other opportunities

*Delegates' feedback on introducing COSCA qualification into befriending:*

- At first, many tables felt that it would be wrong for BN(S) – BN(S) is a national organisation for *befriending* and it's too confusing for befriending projects to offer volunteers & staff a course that appears linked to counselling: a core boundary in befriending is that befrienders are not counsellors. However, on reflection, and after further clarification from Mary Fisher at Greater Easterhouse, it was stated that this course was about counselling *skills* and most then felt that these underlying skills would be very relevant & felt that BN(S) could consider adopting the course (but would be happier if it was called something else e.g. communication skills or listening skills).
- COSCA course would enable a deeper development of skills and a greater awareness of self. Being an impartial listener a great skill to have and one that is suitable to befriending. The course might be a way of retaining volunteers.
- Perhaps it's something that could be offered to befriending staff – COSCA would be a useful tool for dealing with volunteers.
- There may be an issue with the time commitment
- May be beneficial for staff especially for supervising other staff & volunteers
- Would probably not need to do all four modules in terms of the work we are doing
- Perhaps we could share COSCA training with other local organisations

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